United Nations A/C.4/71/SR.18

General Assembly
Seventy-first session
Official Records

Distr.: General
10 January 2017

Original: English

# Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

**Summary record of the 18th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 28 October 2016, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Poels (Vice-Chair) ..... (Belgium)

## Contents

Agenda item 47: Effects of atomic radiation

Agenda item 51: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects (*continued*)

Agenda item 52: Comprehensive review of special political missions (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

16-18851 (E)

Please recycle

*In the absence of Mr. Drobnjak (Croatia), Mr. Poels (Belgium), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.*

**Agenda item 47: Effects of atomic radiation**
(A/71/46 and A/C.4/71/L.5)

1. **Mr. Yonekura** (Japan), Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, introduced the report of the Scientific Committee on its sixty-third session (A/71/46). The session, which had marked the Scientific Committee's sixtieth anniversary, had been attended by all 27 members and more than 120 scientists. The occasion had also marked the publication of a United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) booklet entitled "Radiation: Effects and Sources," which was based on the Scientific Committee's work and was being translated into four official languages, as well as two anniversaries: 30 years since the Chernobyl accident and 5 years since the accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. At the session, the Committee had been lauded for its expertise and efforts to share its findings with a broader audience.

2. Four scientific annexes had been approved and were currently being published. The first contained the methodology for estimating human exposure to radioactive discharges in the environment. In recent years, the Scientific Committee had reviewed and updated its methodology to make it more robust and suitable for estimating global and regional exposures from routine discharges to various environments. It had subsequently been used to update and extend the assessment of radiation exposures from electricity-generating technologies. While radiation exposure was only a minor factor in energy policy analyses, the Scientific Committee's assessments offered some insight into it.

3. The largest collective dose — or population dose — to the public and to workers per unit of electricity generated came from the coal cycle owing to exposures to naturally occurring radionuclides in coal. The combined collective dosage per unit of electricity generated was greater for coal than for nuclear exposure, although exposure to long-lived radionuclides was estimated to last up to 500 years. Doses were slight in normal operations, but would be of a greater magnitude in the event of a nuclear accident.

4. The Scientific Committee had reviewed the biological effects of two internal emitters – tritium and uranium radioisotopes. Internal emitters were radionuclides which were consumed or inhaled and, unlike external emitters, delivered uneven doses, which made them more complex to measure and assess. Tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen, occurred both naturally and artificially in the operation of nuclear reactors or other industrial installations, where workers were mostly exposed to it, and was encountered mainly in the form of tritiated water. The Committee had concluded that models could estimate the distribution of tritiated water in the human body, but not at the cellular or DNA level. Based on the available data, there was no firm and direct evidence of its carcinogenic effect. The Committee had also concluded that the accumulation of tritium in organic foodstuffs warranted further investigation.

5. The second study had reviewed the biological effects of exposure to the radioisotopes of uranium, a naturally-occurring element. Workers' internal exposures to uranium mainly resulted from mining activities and its use as a nuclear fuel. Although there was public concern about exposure to depleted uranium used in munitions, the Scientific Committee had concluded that no clinically significant pathologies had been caused by it. While tumorigenic effects in animals were linked to radiological toxicity, other effects had been clearly linked to chemical toxicity. Acceptable uranium levels in drinking water were determined by chemical rather than radiological toxicity.

6. Following the publication of its 2013 report on the levels and effects of exposure at the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident (A/68/46), the Scientific Committee had established a group of experts to keep abreast of new scientific publications on that subject. The group had published its first digest in a 2015 white paper in English and Japanese and would formally present its 2016 white paper in Japan in November. The Scientific Committee continued to deem the major assumptions and findings of its 2013 report valid. Thus far, there had been no evidence of

increased thyroid cancer rates attributable to radiation exposure. However, some scientific topics warranted further analysis or additional research. The Scientific Committee would continue to follow developments and would update its 2013 report at an appropriate time. Furthermore, the Scientific Committee had worked to share its findings with those who valued that information the most. Following its previous outreach efforts in Japan, another event was planned in Aizu-Wakamatsu. The Scientific Committee would continue convening focus groups in the health, social services and education sectors that would be able to use and share those findings.

7. Turning to the Scientific Committee's programme of work, he said that, in 2014, its secretariat had launched an online platform to facilitate data collection on medical exposure and, more recently, on occupational exposure. Its collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) had resulted in joint questionnaires for its global surveys. The secretariat had also requested that countries nominate national contact points to coordinate the collection of national data. By October 2016, over 50 countries had nominated their contact persons and other countries were invited to do so. The Scientific Committee would conduct a preliminary evaluation of the data at a subsequent session. Its secretariat would begin conducting similar surveys on public exposures from natural and artificial sources of radiation.

8. The Scientific Committee's current strategic plan covered the 2014-2019 period. Long-term strategic directions for its work beyond 2019 included continuing to evaluate people's exposure levels, biological mechanisms and the health effects of low-dose radiation and dose rates and to assess the health implications of population exposures. To that end, the Scientific Committee would establish working groups, seeking out expertise from States which were not part of its membership; bolster efforts to present its findings; and further enhance links with other bodies. Those strategies would entail a change in the Scientific Committee's working methods, which could affect the Fourth Committee's future deliberations on its membership. In that regard, the Scientific Committee recalled the Secretary-General's recent report to the General Assembly on that topic (A/69/350) and maintained that any increase in membership must above all enhance its ability to conduct its scientific work.

9. Studies on biological mechanisms and the risks of exposure to radon had been launched in 2016 and a few short papers would be published. A study on the risk of second cancers after radiotherapy and a general review of epidemiological studies on radiation and cancer would be started in 2017. The Scientific Committee's work was fundamental to the international radiation safety framework and to the decisions made by Governments and international bodies. The transfer of information was supported by precluding the Scientific Committee from deliberating on protection or technological decisions.

10. The Scientific Committee provided added value to the global community as a cost-effective mechanism for sharing scientific knowledge and had earned respect internationally for its objectivity, independence and quality of work, attributes which needed to be maintained in the future. It had also demonstrated flexibility when conducting its focused evaluation of the consequences of the Fukushima nuclear accident, which had offered many valuable lessons for the Scientific Committee's working methods.

11. The contributions made by some Member States to the general trust fund established to support the work of the Scientific Committee helped the secretariat to accelerate work and address outreach and infrastructure. Much, if not all the outreach work by the Scientific Committee was financed by voluntary contributions to the trust fund. The secretariat's capacity to support the Scientific Committee and take on new projects would be significantly reduced if contributions were not sufficient and sustained, and therefore he would be grateful if the General Assembly could encourage such contributions.

12. **Mr. Liu Jun** (China) said that, in March 2016, his Government and the United States had formally established a nuclear security demonstration centre, the largest of its kind in the Asia-Pacific region and possibly in the entire world. It was well equipped and designed to enhance any exchange or training. He wondered whether the Scientific Committee had engaged in any contact with that centre.

13. **Mr. Yonekura** (Japan), Chair of the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic

Radiation, responding to the question posed by the representative of China, said that the Scientific Committee focused solely on evaluating the levels and effects of radiation and did not work on protection or other policy matters. Other international bodies, such as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), would be more appropriate participants in such initiatives.

*General debate*

14. **Ms. Kemppainen** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the European Union was satisfied with the outcome of the sixty-third session of the Scientific Committee. That Committee's work and assessments had played a key role in improving the international scientific understanding of exposure to ionizing radiation and its health and environmental effects and in providing essential and authoritative scientific information to the international community. Earlier key assumptions and findings set out by the Scientific Committee in its 2013 report on the Fukushima Daiichi accident had been further confirmed by publications.

15. The European Union welcomed the Scientific Committee's cautious approach in evaluating epidemiological studies of radiation effects and its intention to publish a dedicated document on quality criteria in that domain. It also welcomed the completion of the evaluation on radiation exposure from electricity generation and on the doses, risks and effects of radiation from internally deposited tritium and radionuclides of uranium.

16. The Scientific Committee's programme of work was in line with the priorities of the European Union, which were reflected by its research community's strategic agenda on radiation protection, and contributed to the Multidisciplinary European Low Dose Initiative (MELODI).

17. **Mr. García Moritán** (Argentina) said that the Scientific Committee's professionalism and efficiency were evidenced by its report (A/71/46). Argentina was satisfied by the findings of the comparative study on radiation exposure from electricity generation, which showed that the largest collective dose to workers per unit of electricity generated was found in the solar power cycle, followed by the wind power cycle, owing to the large amounts of rare earth metals required and the natural radionuclides to which workers were exposed during mining of low-grade ore. Those important findings should be used alongside other data to determine which electricity-generating technologies best served national and global interests. Additionally, the Committee's conclusions on the biological effects of selected internal emitters clearly showed that international standards for protection against tritium radiation were in line with existing knowledge and that the values of weighting factors for tritium emissions were adequate. It was to be hoped that the United Nations specialized agencies responsible for establishing those standards would take note of the Committee's landmark conclusions.

18. With regard to the future work of the Scientific Committee, Argentina was pleased that its proposals concerning exposure to radon in homes and the workplace and its scientific views on the dose and dose rate effectiveness factor had been accepted and were already being acted on. Until the Committee issued its report on radon exposure, special agencies must refrain from changing the current standards. Recalling that ambiguity on the use of the dose rate effectiveness factor had led to media confusion about the impact of the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear accident, he said that Argentine experts had contacted the secretariat and were ready to work to resolve the issue.

19. Argentina would continue to make substantive contributions in kind to the Scientific Committee, such as the recent translation into Spanish of the UNEP publication entitled "Radiation: Effects and Sources". However, it was unacceptable for the Committee to rely on pledges of voluntary contributions to the general trust fund in order to maintain the intensity of its work and improve the dissemination of its findings to the public in the official languages of the Organization. It was a statutory requirement for core activities to be financed from the United Nations budget.

20. **Mr. Díaz Ortega** (Mexico) said that information on the impact of atomic radiation collected by the Scientific Committee had proved useful, allowing

Member States to evaluate risks and put into effect radiation protection measures. Minimizing the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons should be at the core of all multilateral discussions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and the global security agenda.

21. As a member of the Scientific Committee, Mexico participated actively in the review and evaluations of the scientific issues under its remit and had appointed a leading expert to the Committee. To promote greater understanding of the Committee's work, it was essential to disseminate its activities effectively by leveraging modern information and communications technology and using layperson's terms. That would require greater efforts and incur costs that must be taken into account. In that regard, Mexico had cooperated with Spain and Argentina in the translation of the UNEP publication on radiation for use as a scientific guide for the general public. Raising awareness of the devastating impacts of nuclear weapons had fostered international debate on the issue and the international community must continue to build on the lessons learned.

22. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan) said that, as a member of the Scientific Committee, Pakistan was cognizant of its important role in disseminating knowledge about the levels, effects and risks of radiation. Aware of the many potential uses and benefits of nuclear technology, and of its devastating negative side effects, nations were sensitized to the need for extreme caution as they broadened their use of nuclear energy and nuclear applications in health, agriculture, industry, research and development.

23. Pakistan had a robust national infrastructure, which met international safety and security standards for nuclear installations, to protect workers, the general public and the environment from radiation stemming from the peaceful use of radioactive material in power plants, medical centres and other facilities. The Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority was responsible for controlling, regulating and supervising radiation safety in all facilities operated by the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and other public and private sector bodies. Nuclear facilities were required to develop radiation safety policies and procedures, in compliance with regulatory requirements to limit radiation exposure and mitigate radiological consequences. Mitigation measures and emergency plans must be in place to protect the public in the event of accidents at nuclear facilities. Furthermore, all nuclear facilities were required to develop comprehensive radiological environmental monitoring programmes to sample and measure radiological levels in their vicinity.

24. The Regulatory Authority, a national warning point and the competent authority designated under early notification and assistance conventions for coordination of nuclear or radiological emergencies at the national and international levels, had developed a thorough emergency preparedness and response system. Pakistan regularly participated in emergency exercises conducted by IAEA. In addition to routine inspections by the Regulatory Authority, the Directorate General of Safety, the independent safety body of the Atomic Energy Commission, conducted periodic inspections of all facilities handling radioactive sources. The Directorate also inspected and maintained a database of sealed radioactive sources in all Commission facilities to ensure their safe storage and use. Health monitoring programmes and free medical care for workers had been developed and implemented in all Commission facilities. To date, no incident of radiation-induced diseases, including cancer, had been reported.

25. Pakistan remained firmly committed to upgrading infrastructure and building capacity, in collaboration with international organizations, to support radiation safety and to guard against the harmful effects of atomic radiation. Foolproof protective and safety measures were vital.

26. **Ms. Arredondo Pico** (Cuba) said that the current work of the Scientific Committee was of the utmost importance, in particular its follow-up on the levels and effects of radiation exposure due to the nuclear accident following the great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami. Her delegation was pleased to note that recent data had revealed no increase in the risks associated with exposure in humans, meaning that there would be no higher incidence of disease in Japanese citizens living near the affected area. The wide range of topics and the high scientific level of the Committee's reports rendered them invaluable reference documents for the adoption of national and international radiation protection standards.

27. Seventy-one years after the indiscriminate and unjustifiable attack on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the major world Powers had yet to give up their nuclear arsenals. Greater efforts were needed to ban and destroy nuclear weapons once and for all. Cuba reaffirmed its position that the only effective way to guarantee international peace and security and to prevent the future use of weapons that threatened the annihilation of humankind was to adopt an international legal instrument that would totally eliminate weapons of mass destruction and, above all, nuclear weapons. Current international law was insufficient. It was also vital for all Member States to guarantee that their use of nuclear energy was strictly for peaceful purposes.

28. Despite economic difficulties stemming from the cruel economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed on Cuba, his country had offered its assistance to the brotherly people of Ukraine following the Chernobyl accident through its humanitarian programme in Tarará. The programme, in addition to providing care to thousands of children affected by atomic radiation, had played an important scientific role as the data collected had been disseminated at major scientific events and had been used by a number of agencies and institutions of the United Nations system. It was important to maintain and strengthen the links between the Scientific Committee and bodies such as WHO, IAEA and UNEP. All of humanity stood to benefit from such cooperation through the application of technological advances, particularly in health and environmental protection.

29. **Mr. Ilnytskyi** (Ukraine) said that, given the potentially harmful effects of exposure to radiation on present and future generations, there was a continuing need to compile information about atomic and ionizing radiation and analyse their effects on mankind and the environment. It was also important to disseminate the results of the work of the Scientific Committee, whose assessments of global and regional exposures to radiation provided the foundation for formulating international standards for the protection of the public and workers against ionizing radiation. As an active member of the Scientific Committee, Ukraine stood ready to participate in updating and consolidating the findings on the radiological consequences of the accident at the Fukushima-Daiichi nuclear power station. Follow-up was needed in order to continue assessing the level and effects of radiation exposure resulting from that accident. The increased incidence of thyroid cancer among victims of nuclear accidents required further consideration as, according to Ukrainian estimates based on the Chernobyl disaster, symptoms surfaced approximately four years later.

30. His delegation acknowledged the progress made by the Scientific Committee on its programme of work and welcomed the updating of the methodology for estimating public exposures from discharges. That document was particularly important given the need to establish sanitary zones around Ukrainian nuclear power plants, including a radioactive waste storage facility within the 30-kilometre zone. He also looked forward to the finalization and approval of the crucial Scientific Committee document on radiation exposure from electricity generation.

31. April 2016 had marked the thirtieth anniversary of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant, the effects of which had rippled far beyond the more than 2,000 contaminated towns and villages across Ukraine. As part of the ongoing attempts to mitigate the consequences of the catastrophe, construction of the New Safe Confinement was under way and in late November 2016 sliding arches would be pulled over the destroyed reactor. The anniversary offered an important opportunity to heighten awareness of the complexities of recovery and the needs of the affected areas and to mobilize international assistance complementing national mitigation efforts.

32. Ukraine recognized the Scientific Committee's contribution to the development of State legislation and norms governing nuclear and radiation safety and fully supported the ongoing activities of the Committee, whose scientific role and independence must be maintained.

33. **Mr. Karem** (Iraq) said that the increased use of nuclear and radioactive energy worldwide called for scientific research with a view to establishing appropriate mechanisms to address the dangers of radiation and to reduce the impact of exposure to it. Information on measures to combat radiation exposure should be disseminated in order to increase the exchange of information and interaction among Member States investing in relevant studies and raise popular awareness of the effects of radiation on human health and the environment. All countries bore a shared

responsibility to ensure that nuclear and radioactive energy was used safely and in accordance with international regulations and frameworks, given the potential impact of radioactive pollution on humankind as a whole. Moreover, developed countries investing in nuclear energy and technology must assume their responsibilities in that regard.

34. The adverse effects of atomic radiation on human beings and the environment were of grave importance. His Government was bound by the Iraqi Constitution to fulfil its international obligations in the areas of non-proliferation and the development, production and use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Iraq was working with the relevant international organizations to contain the effects of environmental pollution resulting from previous armament programmes. Atomic radiation and the attendant environmental pollution had given rise to deadly diseases that could be transmitted from one generation to the next.

35. Iraq continued to endure the aftereffects of radioactive contamination from previous wars and armament programmes – the product of the previous regime's ill-considered policy – as well as from the destruction of military facilities and the use of chemical weapons by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. His Government had begun the process of liberating Mosul and ridding it of the scourge that imperilled the entire world; hence its need for financial and human resources and international assistance to mitigate the effects of radiation and manage and dispose of radioactive resources and inactive plants. Iraq stood ready to cooperate with the United Nations system and the international community on the formulation of frameworks for the safe use of nuclear energy and called on all other countries to do the same.

36. **Mr. Prasad** (India) said that, although his delegation appreciated the work of the Scientific Committee, it was concerned that the body's projections with regard to collective exposure to radiation and its impact on health could lead to misinterpretations. In view of the serious efforts undertaken to predict possible cancer deaths attributable to such exposure following the accidents in Chernobyl and Fukushima, the scientific community and international bodies should limit their use of collective dose when estimating risk. There was no conclusive evidence that the offspring of parents exposed to radiation had an increase in hereditary effects, such as congenital malformation, a view that was strongly supported by data published by Indian scientists on newborns in the high-level natural radiation area of the Kerala Coast. It should also be noted that using risk assessment to arrive at a limit of radiation exposure was leading to confusion among the public, as the limit was much lower than the dose that could cause significant harm. It was also problematic to attribute the detection of increased nodes in Japanese children to radiation exposure, as that finding could be due to the extensive aggressive scanning carried out among the population, in particular children, in Japan.

37. Epidemiological studies should be encouraged worldwide, including in high background radiation areas, with a view to confirming the inappropriateness of applying the linear no-threshold model in radiation protection philosophy. Further investigation was required into whether cancer could be attributed to radiation exposure in the light of reported cases of a reduction in the incidence of natural cancer in low-dose/low-dose rate situations. Moreover, the application of modelling dispersion/radiological impact for long periods of time in order to estimate human exposures due to radioactive discharges might not be correct, since population density and distribution would not be predictable for the future.

38. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that nuclear energy provided a clean source of energy that was useful in a variety of areas, including health care, food preservation and scientific and technological research and development. Despite those beneficial uses, the international community should remain wary of the harmful effects of atomic radiation on human beings and the environment.

39. His Government attached great importance to the role of the Scientific Committee. As a body that promoted wider knowledge and understanding of the risks of radiation, it should benefit from the contribution and knowledge of all countries that possessed a high level of relevant expertise and potential, including through their membership and participation in the work of the Committee. The Islamic Republic of Iran fit that description and reiterated its interest, as expressed in writing to the

Secretary-General in 2013, in becoming a member of the Scientific Committee and contributing to its work.

40. **Mr. Bin Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his delegation welcomed the report of the Scientific Committee (A/71/46), in particular the useful evaluations of the effects of ionizing radiation and its risks for public health and occupational safety. Its evaluation in the aftermath of the Fukushima accident was of particular importance to his country as it continued to invest in nuclear safety and safeguards. Given the cross-cutting relevance of that body's work, it was crucial that it coordinate with other relevant United Nations entities, including IAEA. The Scientific Committee had made welcome efforts, supported by UNEP, to disseminate its work. However, additional voluntary contributions were needed for that purpose.

41. Given the experience of Bangladesh in promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy, it was willing to explore avenues to broaden the scope of its engagement with the Scientific Committee. His delegation had taken note of observations regarding the optimal size and capacity of that body, as well as the alternative means of engagement available, and remained open to further discussion in that regard.

42. As data collection and sharing had an impact on the capacity of the Scientific Committee to effectively carry out its work, his Government would contribute in that regard and urged other Member States to designate their national points of contact.

43. **Mr. Arcia Vivas** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that, although the Scientific Committee had carried out commendable work on the effects of radiation exposure in the aftermath of the 2011 earthquake in Japan, the body should examine the new information available on that accident.

44. The use of nuclear technology was on the rise globally, making it urgent for the international community to strengthen international norms based on scientific evaluations, an area in which the Scientific Committee could be very useful. Its studies could contribute to decision-making at the State and multilateral levels on the use of nuclear technologies, and to the debate on energy, waste management, the medical applications of such technologies and environmental protection.

45. Despite having experienced an era in which atomic weapons had been used against civilian populations and the nuclear arms race had accelerated, resulting in a dark legacy of weapons capable of destroying the planet several times over, humankind had nonetheless benefited from advances in the development of nuclear energy and technology for peaceful purposes. Nevertheless, the peaceful use of nuclear energy was accompanied by the risk of human error or natural disasters, and the tragedies of Chernobyl and Fukushima served as a reminder of the need for precaution and the broad sharing of all available information on the effects of atomic radiation. His Government supported investigations by the Special Committee into the potential effects on the population and the environment of past nuclear tests conducted in remote regions.

46. Given the risks, efforts to educate and to raise the awareness of the public were essential. That included highlighting the differences between human exposure to radiation from nuclear sources and exposure for medical purposes. The Department of Public Information should use its various platforms to continue circulating and promoting information on the effects of atomic radiation.

47. His Government reiterated its commitment to developing international standards for protection against the effects of atomic radiation, and would work towards that aim with the relevant specialized bodies, thereby promoting peaceful uses of nuclear energy and helping to protect the world population, biodiversity, water resources and ecosystems.

48. **Mr. Liu Jun** (China) said that his country's atomic energy agency had established a national nuclear security technical centre to intensify the daily monitoring and management of nuclear security. A member of IAEA since 1984, China had acceded to several relevant international conventions, including the Convention on Assistance in the Case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency, and had concluded bilateral agreements on nuclear assistance involving cooperation and exchange activities with over 30 countries.

49. China remained committed to working with other countries to establish an international nuclear security system and share the benefits of the use of nuclear energy. In 2016, the Chinese President had attended the

fourth World Nuclear Security Summit; his Government had also intensified its exchange and cooperation with other concerned countries on sources of nuclear radiation. China intended to contribute further to the work of the Scientific Committee, and his delegation hoped that the Committee would strengthen its cooperation with United Nations specialized agencies in order to enhance the effectiveness of its work.

*Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.5: Effects of atomic radiation*

50. **Mr. Aoki** (Japan), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the sponsors, said that his country had a long-standing commitment to the safety of nuclear activities, particularly in the light of the Fukushima nuclear accident. The draft resolution affirmed support for the United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation and its vital work of scientific review in the service of the scientific community and the broader public, contributing to greater understanding of the effects of ionizing radiation. Noting the importance of disseminating the Scientific Committee's findings, he welcomed the publication of the report on the levels and effects of radiation exposure after the 2011 great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami. At a series of public dialogues held in Fukushima prefecture in 2016, a team of experts from the Scientific Committee had presented the findings of the report, informing people on the subject and alleviating their concerns.

51. **The Chair** said that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications and that Peru, the Russian Federation, Spain and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia had become sponsors.

52. *Draft resolution A/C.4/71/L.5 was adopted.*

**Agenda item 51: Comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects** (*continued*)

**Agenda item 52: Comprehensive review of special political missions** (*continued*) (A/71/330)

53. **Mr. Elmodir** (Libya) said that special political missions, which were growing in number and diversity, were one of the most important tools at the Organization's disposal to maintain international peace and security through preventive diplomacy. As the objective of such missions was to prevent conflict and support the choices made by the State, the principle of national ownership and coordination with United Nations agencies must be promoted. Moreover, security concerns must be linked to economic and social development, with a view to strengthening the capacities of States to safeguard the interests of their citizens and provide them with essential services. The mandates of political missions must be defined clearly and their staff must be selected in line with those mandates in a manner that ensured respect for State sovereignty and independence.

54. The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) had been established to support the legitimate choice and aspiration of the Libyan people to build a democratic State based on the rule of law. In the aftermath of the outbreak of armed conflict in Tripoli in 2014, the Mission had been forced to relocate to Tunisia to pursue its work of promoting political dialogue and rapprochement between the factions. Those efforts had culminated in the conclusion of the Libyan Political Agreement and the subsequent formation of the Presidential Council of the Government of National Accord, which was striving to resolve the Libyan crisis and empower the country to build a State of civil institutions, promote development and combat terrorism.

55. UNSMIL must build on that momentum by enabling all parties to achieve a comprehensive solution through compromise. In his recent address at the general debate of the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Presidential Council had called on all parties in Libya to work together to help the country achieve peace and security and tackle the growing economic problems. His delegation hoped that the Mission would be able to return to Tripoli with a renewed mandate to build national institutions and capacities, address human rights violations, collect weapons, demobilize and reintegrate former combatants, and promote the role of youth and women in decision-making. Such actions would enable the Government to implement a national development plan in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want, of the African Union. The only option left to a Libyan people weary of conflict was to pursue a political solution through dialogue and negotiation; to that end,

he hoped that UNSMIL would redouble its efforts to urge all parties to implement the Libyan Political Agreement and make recommendations on how to resolve the crisis and regain the Libyan people's trust.

56. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that the General Assembly played a critical role in maintaining international peace and security by providing the Secretariat with guidance on policy matters pertaining to special political missions. Her delegation supported actions to enhance the Assembly's engagement, including through regular dialogue with the Secretariat. Given that the Committee's previous attempts to increase and enhance Member State engagement had fallen short, there was a need to establish inclusive, well-structured and results-oriented dialogue at the current session. Eritrea looked forward to receiving in the future a more comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on policy matters concerning special political missions, including information on the measures taken by the Secretariat to enhance the effectiveness and ensure the transparency and equitable geographic representation of such missions.

*The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.*

United Nations A/C.4/71/SR.19

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
13 January 2017

Original: English

# Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

**Summary record of the 19th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 31 October 2016, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Mr. Drobnjak ..... (Croatia)

## Contents

Agenda item 50: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

16-18927 (E)

Please recycle

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 50: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories** (A/71/315, A/71/321, A/71/352, A/71/355, A/71/364 and A/71/392)

1. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories and introducing the report of the Special Committee (A/71/352), said that in the absence of an Israeli Government response to the Committee's request to access the Occupied Palestinian Territory, the Committee had held consultations with Member States in Geneva, followed by a visit to Amman in May 2016. There, civil society representatives, victims and witnesses of Israeli violations, as well as Palestinian and United Nations officials, had highlighted the daily violence and humiliation suffered by Palestinian men, women and children under the Israeli occupation. The fact that the issues and incidents described in the report were repetitive of previous Committee reports was a reflection of an unchanging, and at times worsening, reality on the ground.

2. The foremost concern was that Israel was pursuing the expansion of settlements and related activities in a clear violation of international law. Other harmful Israeli practices included the seizure of land, retroactive legalization of outposts, demolition of Palestinian homes and livelihood structures, denial of Palestinian building permits, restrictions of movement or access to livelihoods, and lack of accountability for settler violence. Having received throughout the years of its existence information that confirmed the patterns of human rights violations associated with the Israeli occupation and its inextricably linked settlement enterprise, the Committee firmly believed that the phenomenon remained at the core of human rights violations in the occupied territories. It also shared the view, expressed by the Quartet and human rights organizations, that Israel's continuing policy of illegal settlement expansion was eroding the viability of the two-State solution. During the reporting period, incidents of excessive use of force by Israeli security forces against alleged attackers, protesters and bystanders had resulted in Palestinian deaths and injuries; some of those incidents appeared to be cases of extrajudicial execution.

3. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as at mid-October 2016, Israeli forces had been responsible for the death of 83 Palestinians and injuries to 2,978 in the occupied West Bank, and for 8 Palestinian deaths and injuries to 184 in Gaza in 2016. Although many of those incidents reportedly involved attacks perpetrated by young Palestinians, or security raids into the homes of Palestinians suspected of involvement in such attacks, a significant number had also been reported to have taken place in the context of clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces. At least 17 cases of extrajudicial executions, including executions of children, had been reported since October 2015. The Israeli Government must ensure that national security forces acted proportionally and with restraint, in accordance with the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. Israel should also investigate all cases of alleged excessive use of force and ensure accountability for those responsible.

4. Equally disturbing and lesser-known Israeli practices associated with the occupation included the tendency for Israeli security forces to withhold, purportedly because of security concerns, the bodies of Palestinians they had killed, in what could only be described as a punitive practice. In some cases where bodies had been released, Israeli authorities had reportedly imposed conditions such as the prohibition of autopsies and limitations on funeral rites. Israel had also reportedly demolished or sealed at least 37 homes since October 2015 to punish relatives of Palestinians who attacked Israelis or were suspected of such attacks, leaving dozens of innocent Palestinian families homeless and displaced. That and other punitive practices constituted a form of collective punishment, which was a clear breach of international law and must be ended.

5. An emerging issue of particular concern were threats against and intimidation of human rights defenders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), particularly in the occupied territories. Incidents had involved hacking of e-mail accounts, threatening anonymous letters and phone calls, repeated arrests on spurious charges, intimidation and

even death threats. Most recently, the Israeli Government had reacted to a briefing of the Security Council by the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem by calling for the United Nations to stop funding an extremist organization.

6. The report also raised concerns about the narrowing separation of powers between the judicial and executive branches in Israel, with implications for the independence of the judiciary. There was a profound lack of confidence in the ability of judicial mechanisms to pursue accountability for alleged violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

7. The situation of Palestinian detainees remained a serious concern. There were an estimated 7,000 Palestinian detainees held in Israeli custody, including 340 minors, 56 women and 6 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. The Special Committee was especially concerned by rising numbers of Palestinians arrested for posting allegedly incendiary comments on social media platforms, which raised questions about the excessive restrictions placed by Israel on the freedom of expression and opinion.

8. An estimated 700 Palestinians continued to be held under indefinite administrative detention without charge or trial. Dozens of Palestinian detainees had undertaken hunger strikes in 2016 to protest Israel's practice of administrative detention. Those protests generally ended in negotiated agreements when the detainees' health had become precarious, but that was not an acceptable outcome. Israel must either release administrative detainees without delay, or promptly charge or prosecute them with all the judicial guarantees required by international human rights law and standards.

9. The report also covered the situation in Gaza. Two years after a devastating escalation of hostilities, donor pledges for reconstruction had yet to be fulfilled, and an estimated 85,000 Palestinians remained displaced. All economic indicators pointed to chronic de-development over the past nine years. Daily power outages affected every aspect of life for families in Gaza, from refrigeration of food to hospital services. The rate of unemployment among young people and women was extremely high, while Palestinian energy dependence and Israeli exploitation of Palestinian natural resources weighed further on the economic situation. It appeared that Israeli enforcement of access-restricted areas off the coast of Gaza not only adversely impacted the livelihood of Palestinian fishermen but also ensured that Palestinian oil and gas reserves remained undeveloped.

10. Discriminatory Israeli policies in the occupied Syrian Golan relating to land, housing and development continued to benefit settlers at the expense of Syrians. It had been reported that a new school curriculum introduced in the area sought to diminish the Syrian identity and culture and that the Syrian population was excluded from decision-making on how educational institutions were run or what Syrian children were taught.

11. The status quo was clearly unsustainable. The pursuit of settlement expansion by Israel, its practice of administrative detention and collective punishment, attacks against human rights defenders and human rights organizations, and lack of accountability for human rights violations would only hasten further escalation of the conflict. The international community should redouble its efforts to find concrete options for peace and to bring an end to the occupation, because the time to reach a two-State solution was running out.

12. **Mr. Gilmour** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)), introducing the reports of the Secretary-General under the current agenda item, said that the report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/71/355) drew attention to various developments, including the retroactive approval of what the Israeli Government had once considered to be illegal constructions by settler groups, as well as to the dramatic increase in demolitions since systematic documentation had begun in 2009.

13. The situation created by Israeli settlements in the city of Hebron was also examined in depth. Years of systematic violations of human rights had created an environment that forced many Palestinian families to leave the area, in what could amount to forcible transfers. Seventy-five per cent of all businesses in the Old City had had to close, and 42 per cent of homes in the same area had been abandoned. Some 1,500 Israeli soldiers had been deployed to ensure the security of the approximately 600 Israeli settlers living in the heart of the Palestinian community.

14. The report detailed specific OHCHR-monitored cases of excessive use of force and unlawful killings, including possible extrajudicial executions, carried out by Israeli security forces. There appeared to be a disturbing practice of systematically delaying the provision of medical assistance to wounded Palestinian suspects following attacks on Israelis. Hebron had been the focus of many movement restrictions for Palestinian traffic and the sealing of entire neighbourhoods over the past year, which in some cases might be considered a form of collective punishment prohibited by international law. There were frequent incidents of settler violence against Palestinians which, when combined with the lack of accountability, exacerbated the already dire living conditions. Arrests, intimidation, office raids, and even death threats by settlers and Israeli security forces against international, Palestinian and Israeli human rights defenders and organizations were regular occurrences. The adverse impact of Israeli settlements within Hebron on Palestinian security and standard of living was striking and, should Palestinian families continue to leave, Israeli settlement there would likely expand, further aggravating already deteriorating living conditions for the remaining Palestinians.

15. The report on Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (A/71/364) covered the upsurge in violence that had begun in late September 2015 and highlighted the lack of accountability for violations of human rights and humanitarian law by Israeli forces. The report stressed that the 10-year blockade of Gaza undermined basic human rights, economic prospects and essential services, and exacerbated poverty. In the wake of growing despair and frustration, the many Israeli practices that amounted to collective punishment of Palestinian communities must end. For their part, authorities and Palestinian armed groups in Gaza should also ensure respect for international humanitarian law and accountability for all violations.

16. The report on the work of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (A/71/315) outlined the activities undertaken by the Secretariat, including the Department of Public Information, to support the work of the Special Committee.

17. The report on the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the other occupied Arab territories (A/71/321) summarized the responses received from the Permanent Missions of Brazil, Cuba, the Syrian Arab Republic and the State of Palestine to a request for information about steps taken to implement General Assembly resolution 70/88.

18. The report on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/71/392) was a compilation of responses received from Member States to a request for information on steps taken to implement General Assembly resolution 70/91. In addition to the response from the Permanent Mission of the Syrian Arab Republic, replies had been received from Qatar and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation.

19. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation rejected any attempts to portray as one-sided or biased the reports before the Committee or other relevant reports that depicted the critical human rights situation in Palestine accurately. On the contrary, those reports examined the situation through the clear lens of the Charter of the United Nations, international humanitarian law and international human rights law.

20. A number of Israeli and multinational corporations had business ties to Israeli settlements, thereby enabling and profiting from their growth, in contravention of international laws and standards as reflected in the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. She asked the Chair of the Special Committee what measures businesses and their home States could take to disengage from complicity in Israeli violations of human rights and international law in Occupied Palestine, including East Jerusalem.

21. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) asked the Chair of the Special Committee to compare the socioeconomic opportunities of Palestinians in the occupied territories to those available to settlers living in the territories illegally.

22. **Mr. González** (Nicaragua) asked the Chair of the Special Committee to elaborate on his references to the Israeli use of force against Palestinian civilians and the increase in extrajudicial killings, and to provide

examples of instances in which the victims had represented no threat to others.

23. **Mr. Cita Nugraha** (Indonesia), referring to Israeli policies that compelled Palestinians to leave their homes, asked the Chair of the Special Committee what implication such policies had for the livelihood, fundamental freedoms and human rights of Palestinian residents and how the international community could prevent conditions from worsening.

24. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) asked the Chair of the Special Committee to elaborate on the psychological and socioeconomic impact of the de-development of Gaza on its population, as well as the continued ability of the population, in particular women and children, to deal with the situation.

25. **Mr. Ben Sliman** (Tunisia) asked the Chair of the Special Committee whether such acts as the demolition of homes and the prevention of family reunification could be part of a deliberate policy of the occupying Power against Palestinian civilians and, if so, what might be the underlying motivation for such a policy.

26. **Ms. Yánez Loza** (Ecuador) asked for details on the situation of child detainees, in particular the penalties administered, including stoning, and prolonged house arrest and imprisonment. She also requested details on draft legislation concerning the forced feeding of Palestinian prisoners undertaking a hunger strike.

27. **Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) asked what steps could be taken to ensure a safe work environment for human rights defenders in the occupied territories.

28. **Mr. Perera** (Sri Lanka), speaking as Chair of the Special Committee, said that, as the Special Committee recommended in paragraph 96 (d) of its report (A/71/352), the international community must ensure that private corporations respected human rights and had no commercial transactions with bodies linked to settlements or the exploitation of resources in the occupied territories. The Special Committee had received evidence regarding the practices of some corporations, but States also had a responsibility to enact domestic legislation and provide guidance to businesses on the risks of potential complicity in the maintenance and expansion of illegal settlements. Due diligence was the responsibility of companies and States, and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights provided the appropriate framework for taking necessary measures.

29. With regard to trade, full implementation of the recommendations contained in the 2013 report of the independent international fact-finding mission to investigate the implications of the Israeli settlements on the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the Palestinian people throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, should be the starting point for Member States seeking to comply with their obligations. OHCHR had been mandated by the Human Rights Council to implement resolutions following up on the mission's report. All Member States must ensure that trade relations did not contribute to the maintenance of settlements considered illegal under international law.

30. The Special Committee had heard extensive testimony about the adverse impact of night raids and collective punishment on women and children. The increase in suicide rates and recourse to violence among young people also indicated the adverse psychological effects of such practices and policies. Based on the testimony, the Special Committee had found that those actions were a reflection of true policy rather than isolated incidents. It had also concluded, with regard to the practice of force feeding, that waiting until a person's life was in danger to negotiate a settlement was life threatening and adequate measures must be taken before that point.

31. The Special Committee had also given special attention to the creation of a safe environment for human rights defenders. The decision taken by the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem to no longer file complaints against the military enforcement system was significant and reflected a lack of faith in the Israeli judicial system. If other Israeli NGOs were to follow suit, that would seriously undermine the Israeli Government's claims that it had adequate domestic accountability systems in place.

32. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said it was incomprehensible that the injustices of 50 years of belligerent occupation by Israel continued unabated as millions of Palestinians were subjugated by illegal means in a situation that not only undermined international law but also tarnished the international community and the credibility of the

international system as a whole. It was high time for real action, based on conscience, responsibility and the rule of law, to end the prolonged occupation and make peace a reality. Against the backdrop of continued international paralysis, the occupying Power had persisted with its systematic gross violations with full impunity, undermining all efforts to achieve a just peace based on the two-State solution and fulfil the rights of the Palestinian people, including the Palestine refugees, in accordance with resolution 194 (III). The international community must be firm in demanding that Israel should comply with its obligations under international law. Given that country's failure to investigate serious violations by its occupying forces, the State of Palestine reiterated its call for international accountability for those crimes in order to end the culture of impunity, deter further violations, bring justice for the victims, and ultimately promote peace.

33. The relentless pursuit of the settlement enterprise in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, by successive Israeli Governments confirmed that the colonial, expansionist agenda mattered more than peace and security. Since 2015, Israel had continued the illegal construction of settlements and a network of Israeli-only bypass roads linking the settlements, flagrantly advancing its plans to colonize and annex more Palestinian land. Palestinian civilians had been forcibly transferred and denied basic services, their homes and infrastructure destroyed. According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, in 2016 alone, 958 structures had been demolished and at least 1,447 Palestinians had been displaced, including 690 children. There was ongoing obstruction of humanitarian assistance, imposition of movement restrictions and other measures designed to segregate the indigenous Palestinian population from the settler population — privileging the latter — and to alter the demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in absolute defiance of the international community's calls for a cessation of all such policies and measures. Israel continued to flout international humanitarian, human rights and criminal law, United Nations resolutions, the 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice and roadmap obligations, in contempt of international consensus that settlement activities undermined the viability of the two-State solution based on the 1967 borders. Moreover, the unlawful settlement campaign constituted the main infringement of the Palestinian people's inalienable right to self-determination, as noted by the independent international fact-finding mission on Israeli settlements.

34. The illegal Israeli practices and policies in Occupied Palestine constituted gross violations of the Palestinian people's human rights. During the period covered by the Special Committee's report, military raids in Palestinian population centres had continued, deepening the protection crisis endured by a defenseless people. The occupying forces had killed more than 200 Palestinians, at least 17 of them in extrajudicial executions, and had withheld the dead bodies of Palestinians, denying the deceased and their families their dignity. The occupying forces continued to destroy Palestinian homes and civilian infrastructure in areas marked for settlement expansion in order to create a coercive environment in the form of harsh living conditions for civilians. Furthermore, those forces stood by as extremist Israeli settlers routinely terrorized and assaulted Palestinians in Nablus, Jenin, Al-Khalil, Bethlehem and Jerusalem. The Israeli Government fueled settler crimes through hateful rhetoric and incitement against Palestinian people and holy sites, particularly the Haram al-Sharif, threatening to ignite a religious conflict that could threaten the security and stability of the entire region.

35. In the Gaza Strip, the devastating blockade and the destruction wreaked during the military aggressions of 2014 continued to affect human rights and disrupt every aspect of life. The overt collective punishment had led, inter alia, to the chronic de-development of Gaza, where approximately half of the population was unemployed and 80 per cent depended on humanitarian aid. The United Nations country team there had reported that, without remedial action, it was doubtful that Gaza would be habitable by 2020. In addition to depriving Palestinians of sources of livelihood and food by destroying Palestinian agricultural land and restricting access to the Mediterranean Sea off the Gaza coast, the occupying Power had also created an enduring water and sanitation crisis. As West Bank water resources continued to be diverted for Israeli use, the dire state of the water and sanitation infrastructure as a result of the blockade and military aggressions had rendered 95 per cent of Gaza's water supply unfit for human consumption.

36. The repressive occupying Power still detained more than 7,000 Palestinian civilians, including 450 children, with children as young as 12 regularly seized, beaten and prosecuted in the world's only juvenile military court system. The use of violence and torture in interrogations was systemic and medical negligence had resulted in the death of over 200 Palestinian prisoners. Furthermore, Israel continued to harass and intimidate human rights defenders and members of civil society organizations, targeting Palestinian and Israeli NGOs alike.

37. Those policies and practices — approved at the highest levels — showed a systematic pattern of breaches of international law, many of which amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity. The lives of innumerable victims had been marred by a web of mutually reinforcing violations, which were synonymous and symbiotic with the occupation. Yet, as history had shown, those grave injustices would remain without remedy in the absence of accountability. Nevertheless, the State of Palestine remained steadfast in defending and advancing its just cause through legal, diplomatic and peaceful means. It remained committed to achieving a just and peaceful solution, based on the two-State solution and in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. The international community must act to end Israeli impunity and guarantee a lasting and definitive solution to the conflict. The Security Council and General Assembly had clear responsibilities, as did States and international organizations, which must pursue policies consistent with international law, including by ending all support to the illegal Israeli settlement enterprise. Ensuring the compliance of Israel with the Fourth Geneva Convention, human rights covenants and relevant United Nations resolutions was fundamental for salvaging peace prospects and guaranteeing the Palestinian people their inalienable right to live in freedom, security, peace and dignity in their independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

38. **Mr. Ramírez Carreño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), speaking on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, said that the Movement regretted the worsening human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, and was deeply concerned that Israel had prevented the Special Committee from holding consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities and from gaining access to the occupied territories in line with its mandate. The Movement condemned the Israeli Government's obstinate settlement of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which was a grave violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and various United Nations resolutions, and constituted the main obstacle to peace. The abhorrent Israeli occupation, which remained one of the most destabilizing factors at the regional and global levels, must be ended.

39. The Special Committee's disturbing findings, which showed that the policies and practices of Israel continued to violate the fundamental human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people and other Arabs living under occupation, were a matter of serious concern. The Movement deplored the continuation of Israeli settlement activities through a combination of illegal policies and practices, in particular the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, among them Bedouin and herder communities. Such illegal practices had accelerated, in clear contempt of global calls for Israel to comply with the law and cease all such activities; they were undermining the contiguity of the West Bank, jeopardizing the future viability of the Palestinian State and thus imperiling the two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. In July 2016 alone — when the Quartet had issued its report highlighting the destructive impact of Israeli settlement activities and called for a halt to them — Israel had issued tenders for more than 1,000 units in Occupied East Jerusalem and the Gilo settlements and had used several purportedly legal and administrative measures to expand its control of more Palestinian territory, including the declaration of "state land" and seizure of Palestinian land for archaeological and recreational activities.

40. The Movement condemned the current trend of demolitions and evictions carried out by the occupying Power in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. It was reprehensible that the monthly average number of structures demolished in 2016 in Area C of the occupied West Bank had almost tripled from 2015. By July 2016, 981 Palestinians had been displaced from their homes in East Jerusalem and other areas in the occupied West Bank. The humanitarian impact went beyond the displacement of the

Palestinian communities deprived of shelter; the destruction of their livelihood increased poverty and dependence on humanitarian aid. Furthermore, the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of Palestine denied Palestinians' right to sovereignty over their natural resources, including water and energy resources, and their right to development.

41. The Palestinians who resisted displacement endured violent attacks and threats to their lives and property by illegal Israeli settlers. OHCHR had recorded 175 incidents of settler violence against Palestinians between June 2015 and May 2016, some resulting in deaths, injuries and substantial property damage. The international community had unanimously condemned such hateful acts against Palestinians and the continued impunity of settlers: between 2005 and 2015 only 7.3 per cent of complaints of ideologically motivated attacks had led to indictments, while 85 per cent of cases had been closed owing to police failures during the investigative process. The international community, in particular the Security Council, must take urgent action and practical measures to compel the occupying Power to abide by all of its obligations under international law.

42. The Movement deplored the continued use of excessive force by Israeli occupying forces against the Palestinian civilian population and the suffering caused through the deliberate medical neglect of Palestinian detainees and other illegal practices. It had condemned the occupying Power's unlawful and arbitrary detention and imprisonment of staggering numbers of Palestinian civilians, including children, women and elected officials, and reiterated the call for their immediate release. Israel should immediately cease all violations of international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, and fully abide by its legal obligations.

43. The continuing land closure and naval blockade of the Gaza Strip by Israel, currently in its tenth year, constituted a form of collective punishment of the civilian population that directly contradicted the obligations of Israel under international humanitarian law and its responsibility to meet the needs of a protected population under occupation. The myriad economic, social and psychological consequences of the restrictions imposed by the inhumane blockade destroyed any possibility of development and impeded the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms by the Palestinian civilian population. The Movement called upon Israel to end its illegal blockade of Gaza promptly and unconditionally and to open all its crossing points in accordance with international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

44. With reference to the Syrian Golan, the Movement reaffirmed that all unlawful actions perpetrated by Israel, as well as recent statements by that country claiming sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, constituted clear violations of international law, the Charter of the United Nations and relevant resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Israel must abide by that resolution and withdraw completely to the borders of 4 June 1967. At its recent Summit, the Movement had emphasized, inter alia, the urgency of achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the basis of a two-State solution based on the pre-1967 borders. All parties concerned must make a concerted effort to that end. The Movement reaffirmed its unwavering commitment to the immediate restoration of the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination in an independent and viable State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and to a just solution for the Palestine refugees on the basis of General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

45. **Mr. Chatzisavas** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Ukraine, said that, as his delegation had stated at the last open debate of the Security Council on the Middle East, it was gravely concerned about the trends on the ground, which threatened the viability of the two-State solution. In recent months, there had been an acceleration of negative trends, in direct contradiction to the recommendations in the 2016 report of the Quartet. There was a risk of an entrenched one-State reality of perpetual occupation and conflict incompatible with the realization of the national aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

46. For the European Union, there was no alternative to a negotiated political solution based on the parameters set out in the European Council conclusions on the Middle East Peace process, dated December 2009 and July 2014, which met Israeli and Palestinian security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty.

47. The European Union was extremely concerned by the escalation of violence and tensions in Israel and the occupied Palestinian Territory. It condemned all violence against civilians and acts of terror and insisted that perpetrators of crimes or acts of terror should be brought to justice. The security forces' response needed to be proportional and consistent, regardless of the identity of the perpetrator. Israel must conduct thorough investigations of cases in which lethal force had been used. Compliance with international humanitarian law and international human rights law by State and non-State actors was a cornerstone of peace and security in the region. Alleged violations and abuses by all sides must be investigated in accordance with international standards. The European Union was also concerned about recurring tensions at holy sites and renewed its calls to uphold the status quo established in 1967.

48. The States members of the European Union had never recognized the annexation of territories occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem. All discriminatory treatment of Palestinians in East Jerusalem must end and the status of Jerusalem as the future capital of two States must be resolved through negotiations.

49. The European Union recalled its long-held position that settlements were illegal under international law. Since early 2016, and particularly since the publication of the Quartet report in July 2016, expansion of Israeli settlements had accelerated. The announcement by Israel in September 2016 of its plans to construct 98 new housing units, in what was effectively a new settlement that further threatened the contiguity of a future Palestinian State, had drawn wide condemnation from the international community.

50. Other policies had a negative impact on the socioeconomic development of Area C, which was crucial to the viability of a future Palestinian State. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had illustrated that Israeli demolitions of Palestinian structures in Area C, including structures funded by the European Union and its member States, had risen significantly in 2016, leading to evictions and the threat of forced transfers, including of Bedouin communities. A fundamental change of policy by Israel with regard to the occupied Palestinian Territory, and particularly to Area C, was needed to prevent the irreversible loss of the two-State solution. Enabling accelerated Palestinian construction and the social and economic development of Area C would strengthen the prosperity and security of both Israelis and Palestinians.

51. The European Union and its member States reaffirmed their commitment to implementing existing legislation and bilateral agreements on settlements and ensuring that all agreements with Israel explicitly stated their inapplicability to the territories occupied by Israel in 1967. Of particular concern were such measures as punitive house demolition, the closing off of Palestinian villages and the withdrawal of work permits, which could amount to collective punishment. He recalled applicable international humanitarian law, such as the Fourth Geneva Convention.

52. Militant activity and the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza promoted general instability and were liable to lead to renewed conflict. Fundamental improvements in living conditions were needed, particularly for children and the elderly. While all international donors should promptly honour the pledges made at the Cairo Conference, Gaza's humanitarian needs could be properly addressed only through political progress. To that end, all sides must respect the ceasefire. Indiscriminate attacks were illegal and increased the risk of escalation, threatening the lives of civilians, diverting resources from humanitarian efforts and impeding reconstruction and development. The illicit arms build-up by Hamas and other militant groups must end. The European Union unequivocally condemned all acts of terror and incitement and urged all parties to work towards de-escalating tensions.

53. All Palestinian factions must engage in good faith in the reconciliation process on the basis of the Palestine Liberation Organization platform and the Quartet principles. A single, legitimate and democratic Palestinian Authority, with full control over Gaza, was critical to achieving a viable Palestinian State. He encouraged setting, without delay, a new date for

Palestinian local elections, which could become an important step towards Palestinian democracy and national unity.

54. The European Union reiterated its call on Israel to end the blockade of Gaza and fully open the crossings while addressing legitimate security concerns. The lifting of restrictions on the movement of people, including representatives of the international community, services and goods — and particularly designated dual-use goods — was needed to facilitate reconstruction, service delivery and international infrastructure projects. Both parties were urged to promote confidence and trust-building measures. In that regard, the European Union welcomed the Israeli-Palestinian electricity agreement concluded in September 2016.

55. As part of their bilateral relationship, the European Union and Israel engaged in regular dialogues on human rights protection. The European Union remained concerned about the extensive recourse by Israel to excessive administrative detention of Palestinians without formal charges, and particularly the high number of Palestinian children in detention and continuing reports of ill treatment during the arrest, transfer and interrogation of child detainees in the West Bank. Israel must continue cooperating with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to ensure that gaps between policy and practice were bridged and that the rights of children in Israeli military custody were upheld at all times. Lastly, Israel must resume its full cooperation with OHCHR and with the Human Rights Council and its special procedures.

56. **Ms. Loza** (Ecuador) said it was regrettable that the Special Committee had been unable to hold consultations with the relevant Israeli authorities or gain access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The Israeli Government persisted in extending its illegal settlements unilaterally, building an extensive network of roads and tunnels connecting the settlements and investing financially and politically in industrial zones and tourist and archaeological sites in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Those and other expansionist measures, including new settlements in the West Bank, were part of a deliberate policy to prevent the establishment of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State and thereby preclude the two-State solution.

57. The fact that Israeli law applied to Israeli citizens who entered or lived in the Occupied Palestinian Territory while Palestinians lived under military law was particularly distressing as it meant that two populations living in the same land were subject to different and unequal legal systems, under the authority of a Government that served the one at the expense of the other. Such was the reality entrenched by half a century of foreign military occupation, making it all but impossible to imagine the two-State solution coming to fruition. The inability to enforce United Nations resolutions on the question of Palestine and the indifference of the world Powers directly involved had become further entrenched as well, undermining international attempts to settle conflicts in the region.

58. As the thirtieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development approached, the General Assembly had a vital role to play in ensuring that the Palestinian people were allowed to exercise that legitimate right. A number of international legal instruments and United Nations resolutions, reports and recommendations could serve as tools to prevent the further dilution of a negotiated two-State solution — the only path to attaining lasting peace and the aspirations of both peoples. Her delegation urged Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee and to refrain from disdaining international law and the opinion of the community of nations that, year after year, demanded an end to its illegal expansionist settlement policy.

59. **Mr. Elshandawily** (Egypt) said that his Government was particularly concerned by the well-documented cases, cited in the Special Committee's report (A/71/352), of excessive force by Israeli security forces, including extrajudicial killing. Any observer could not help but be outraged at the incident of an Israeli army medic fatally shooting a Palestinian in the head after the latter had been wounded and neutralized. The report described many cases of collective punishment, a recent surge in arrests and detention, and a lack of accountability and civil remedies. The Secretary-General's report on the Syrian Golan (A/71/392) painted an equally grim picture of the situation in that area. Overall, the reports portrayed a disturbing picture of the conditions endured by Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories, and the Special Committee indicated that measures taken by the Israeli Government to address many of

those issues had not led to significant improvements in accountability.

60. His Government had made its opposition to Israeli settlements very clear in the General Assembly and the Security Council. The overwhelming consensus of the international community was that the continued building and expansion of those illegal settlements jeopardized the peace process and the two-State solution. The self-protection measures implemented by settlers and Israeli occupation forces made normal life nearly impossible for Palestinians. In that regard, his Government fully supported the recommendations set out in the Secretary-General's report on Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan (A/71/355).

61. Ending the occupation and implementing the two-State solution was the sole path to achieving peace and eradicating one of the root causes of the many challenges currently faced by the Middle East. To that end, the international community must work together and look beyond immediate and short-sighted political gains.

62. **Ms. Meitzad** (Israel) said that the Special Committee's report was no more than a collection of unsubstantiated rumours and baseless allegations. It was unfortunate to see United Nations funds spent every year on a product that lacked credibility and a discussion that lacked context. The Special Committee's work did not contribute to creating the conditions necessary to establish meaningful dialogue and bilateral negotiations aimed at ending the conflict.

63. The report did not include any reference to Hamas, the internationally designated terror organization that had terrorized and imposed its brutal policies on the Gazan people. While it cited the Quartet report, it did so selectively and in a deliberately distortive manner, excluding that report's harsh criticism of Palestinian officials' ongoing incitement to terrorism and of the continued violence against Israeli civilians. While the Special Committee expressed concern about the ongoing violence on the ground, it referred only vaguely to Israeli casualties.

64. Since fall 2015, there had been a rise in Palestinian terror attacks and a constant incitement to violence. That wave of violence had already taken the lives of 42 Israelis and injured 577 — facts that had been omitted from the report. That very day, a Palestinian police officer had opened fire at a checkpoint outside the West Bank city of Ramallah, injuring three Israeli soldiers. Hamas had immediately issued a statement praising the attack and had encouraged Palestinian security services to carry out similar ones. The only attack on Israelis mentioned in the report, namely the abhorrent killing of Israelis in Tel Aviv in June 2016, was not labelled a terror attack and was only mentioned to further the accusations against Israel. In addition, the report contained no reference to the ongoing incitement against Israelis or the shameful statements by the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, such as his 2015 statement on the Al-Aqsa mosque, which showed a complete disregard for the history of the Jewish people and intolerance towards other religions. Such statements promoted a false historical narrative and only moved the parties further away from peace. Israel, in contrast, had always strived fervently to protect the rights of all its citizens — Jews and Arabs alike — and had enshrined those rights in its Declaration of Independence.

65. The report also criticized the entire Israeli judicial system without any justification. That judicial system allowed every individual, Israeli or Palestinian, to turn directly and in the first instance to the Supreme Court on any matter and enjoyed a well-established international reputation. Unfounded allegations proved once again that the true purpose of the report was to lambast and harm Israel. Furthermore, the report encouraged the boycotting of Israeli businesses in the name of freedom of expression — a shameful pretext for introducing extremist anti-Israel rhetoric into an official United Nations report.

66. The section of the report dealing with the rebuilding of Gaza did not mention that United Nations officials had commended Israel for its efforts to ensure the effective implementation of a workable mechanism for the reconstruction of Gaza, and instead quoted ungrounded accusations from unnamed civil society organizations. Also omitted was the fact that Israel was taking significant steps to help the residents of the Gaza Strip.

67. Israel had been working closely with the Organization to facilitate the Gaza Reconstruction

Mechanism. Renovation of over 81,000 houses had been completed and 20,000 were currently being repaired, and over 800 public projects had been authorized by that mechanism. Some 800 trucks passed through Kerem Shalom and Erez crossings every day. Israel had facilitated the transfer of over 6 million tons of building materials for reconstruction projects funded by the international community. All types of foodstuffs entered the Gaza Strip without restriction. Only weapons were prohibited and a short list of dual-use items required a special permit.

68. In the first half of 2016, exports of goods from Gaza had increased by 10 per cent, to almost 9,000 tons. Israel had taken additional measures to improve the well-being of Palestinians, granting entry permits for urgent medical care. In 2015, over 130,000 Palestinians had crossed into Israel for medical purposes, including more than 31,000 from Gaza, while over 6,700 tons of medical supplies had entered the Gaza Strip. The number of Palestinians working in Israel had risen and their income benefited 100,000 households, stimulating an additional $1.3 billion worth of economic activity in the Palestinian Authority. Despite the ongoing threat posed to Israeli citizens by rocket attacks launched by Hamas, Israel had demonstrated its commitment to economic expansion policies to improve the humanitarian conditions and standard of living of the civilian population while safeguarding the basic security needs of its citizens.

69. Israel categorically rejected the Special Committee's mandate and work, and called on the countries that believed in peace and dialogue to vote against the resolution supporting that Committee's mandate.

70. **Mr. Al Ali** (United Arab Emirates) said that the Special Committee's latest report confirmed that Israel had continued its illegal actions in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Syrian Golan, including settlement expansion, incessant violence by Israeli settlers against the Palestinians, the destruction of Palestinian property, land confiscation, the forced displacement of Palestinians, the excessive use of force by Israeli forces against Palestinians, the continued blockade of Gaza, the deteriorating situation of Palestinian prisoners, including children, and the exploitation of natural resources in the occupied Palestinian territories and the Golan Heights. Moreover, Israel continued its acts of provocation, racial incitement and illegal tampering with holy sites.

71. Those practices had led to deteriorating humanitarian, economic and social conditions for Palestinians and the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories. The unemployment rate had risen to approximately 40 per cent in Gaza in 2016 and the Palestinians' despair and hopelessness were spreading. The situation was exacerbated by the recruitment and exploitation of young people by terrorist and extremist groups. It was therefore necessary for Israel to cease all practices that were in flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law, the Fourth Geneva Convention, relevant resolutions and the principle of land for peace.

72. His Government was concerned about the escalation of violence in the occupied Palestinian territories and the absence of an imminent and just solution that would restore their inalienable rights to the Palestinian people. It called on the international community and the Security Council to take all necessary steps to save the two-State solution and put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan, so as to enable the Palestinian people to live a normal life and achieve the progress and prosperity to which they aspired. Achieving stability and security in the region was the key to finding a just and lasting solution that allowed Palestinians to establish their independent State on the basis of pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital under the relevant resolutions and in line with the Arab Peace Initiative and the Madrid principles.

73. Lastly, his Government hoped that the Secretariat would increase its support to the Special Committee, given its vital role in documenting the suffering of the Palestinian people and exposing Israeli violations against them. The international community must exert pressure on Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee's members and grant them access to the occupied Palestinian territories in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

74. **Mr. Alruwaished** (Kuwait) said that his delegation commended the Special Committee for its diligent work despite the restrictions imposed upon it by Israel, which refused to cooperate with its investigations. The report of the Special Committee showed that Israel was continuing its systematic

settlement expansion in defiance of international law and internationally recognized resolutions. The Palestinian people's standard of living continued to deteriorate, exacerbating its suffering. Blatant Israeli aggression against the innocent population of the Gaza Strip had obstructed access to basic goods and services, creating a humanitarian catastrophe. Kuwait urged the Security Council to compel Israel to halt its aggression and implement internationally recognized resolutions. Israel must be held legally accountable for the human and material damage and losses its brutal policies had inflicted upon the Palestinian people. Its systematic racism against Palestinians, plunder of their possessions and holy sites and illegal blockade against the Gaza Strip must cease, and crossings into the territory must be reopened to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to its inhabitants. His delegation once again called on Israel to withdraw from the Syrian Golan Heights and from occupied Lebanese territory, in accordance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

75. Israel persistently dismissed the international community's solidarity with the Palestinian people and its bid to establish an independent State. The international community must therefore openly declare its solidarity and compel Israel to cease its brutal aggression and uphold its obligations under international law. The continued construction of settlements and other acts of provocation by Israel had sabotaged efforts to revive the peace process and find a just and definitive solution to the question of Palestine, leading to a dangerous escalation that imperilled regional security and stability. His delegation endorsed the request by Palestine for international protection for the Palestinian people and called on Member States, particularly Security Council members, to back the Palestinian bid for full United Nations membership. Kuwait stood ready to continue extending moral, political and material assistance to the Palestinian people in the legitimate defence of its just cause, until the Israeli occupation of Arab lands came to an end and an independent Palestinian State was established, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His Government welcomed the resolution adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) declaring the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem a Muslim holy site of worship and affirming that the Haram al-Ibrahimi/Tomb of the Patriarchs and the Bilal ibn Rabah Mosque/Rachel's Tomb in Bethlehem were an integral part of Palestine.

76. **Mr. Rasool** (Iraq) said that the occupying Power's continued aggression against the Palestinian people demonstrated its disregard for international law and United Nations resolutions. Therefore, it was the international community's duty to employ all peaceful means to compel Israel to end its illegal occupation and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its right to self-determination and establish an internationally recognized State within 1967 borders. The international community must also urge the United Nations to exert pressure on Israel to grant the Special Committee access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and to facilitate the work of humanitarian organizations assisting the Palestinian people.

77. Colonialist settlement — a war crime under international law — was one of the ugliest forms of terrorism. Israel continued to demolish Palestinian houses, bomb and arbitrarily detain civilians, build settlements on Palestinian land and impose racist laws in an attempt to create new facts on the ground in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. It was the occupying Power's duty to provide judicial safeguards to detainees inside the Territory, in accordance with international humanitarian and human rights law. Furthermore, it must abandon its attempts to change the demographic composition of Jerusalem.

78. His delegation condemned the occupation of the Syrian Golan by Israel since 1967 and the imposition of its laws in the territory since 1981, in violation of Security Council resolution 497 (1981), which had declared the annexation of the Syrian Golan by Israel to be null and void. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict was an international conflict in respect of which international humanitarian law — particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol on non-international conflicts — and international human rights law were applicable. Furthermore, the international community and the United Nations, the guardian of international peace and security, had legal and political responsibilities with respect to the conflict and the Palestinian people pending a final settlement of the question of Palestine.

79. The increasing international recognition of the State of Palestine, with its accession to international organizations and covenants, should be translated into

policies aimed at putting an end to the arbitrary practices targeting Palestinians and stressing the viability of the two-State solution. Iraq was a staunch supporter of the rights of the Palestinian people and their claim to establish an independent State in the Palestinian territories with Jerusalem as its capital. Lastly, he called for Palestinians to be provided with international protection.

80. **Ms. Sughayar** (Jordan) said that the main reason for the increase in violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was the distressing persistence of illegal Israeli practices as part of a systematic policy, in defiance of the will of the international community and in violation of international law. That behaviour had cost both peoples many opportunities to fulfil their aspirations to attain peace and security. The racist aggression of Israeli settlers exacerbated conflict, deepened divisions and spread a culture of hatred.

81. It was not too late for Israel to learn from past lessons, heed international calls to reassess its policies and act on the desire for peace that it had expressed in international forums. Israel must realize that peace could not come until its words were backed by clear, earnest action and a genuine belief in the two-State solution as the only way to enable the two peoples to live side by side in security and stability.

82. Hollow protestations that Palestinian violence was primarily responsible for hindering the peace process were unacceptable. Her Government would welcome an explanation of the extent to which such violence was linked to Israel moving forward with the construction of settlements. Their illegal expansion on Palestinian land was the main obstacle to the establishment of a viable Palestinian State. Only by resolving to end the violence and create conditions conducive to peace could Israel facilitate the resumption of serious negotiations. The blockade of the Gaza Strip and the house demolition, land confiscation and forced displacement of Palestinians from their homes had stoked tensions. The Israeli Government, as the occupying Power, bore full responsibility for all violations of international humanitarian law. Regrettably, Israel continued to deny the Special Committee access to the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Her delegation hoped that the Israeli authorities would cooperate with the Special Committee and enable it to discharge its mandate.

83. Jordan would remain at the forefront of efforts to end the Israeli occupation and to enable the Palestinian people to exercise its legitimate rights, chief among them the right to establish an independent State. Her country would also continue to resist any attempts to change the historical status of Islamic and Christian holy sites in East Jerusalem, in particular the Haram al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, using all diplomatic, political and legal options at its disposal, based on the historic Hashemite Kingdom's guardianship of Islamic and Christian holy sites. The resolution recently adopted by UNESCO called on Israel, the occupying Power, to allow for the restoration of the historic status quo, under which the Jordanian Awqaf Department had exercised exclusive authority over the Haram al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, and for its mandate to be extended to all affairs relating to the unimpeded administration of the Haram al-Sharif/Al-Aqsa Mosque, including maintenance, restoration and regulation of access. The resolution also affirmed the importance of the Old City of Jerusalem and its walls for the three monotheistic religions and expressly stated that nothing in the text should affect the legal status of East Jerusalem as a city under Israeli military occupation or the clear obligations of Israel as occupying Power under international law.

84. Countries that opted to maintain political neutrality on the question of Palestine would neither serve the interests of Israel nor help the parties to settle the conflict. Such a settlement would pave the way for the resumption of genuine, effective and specific negotiations within a time frame leading to a two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State within the 4 June 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the international terms of reference and the Arab Peace Initiative. Only by ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian State would regional security, acceptance of the State of Israel and coexistence with the Palestinian people and other peoples in the region be achieved.

85. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic) said his delegation had hoped that the Secretary-General's report on the occupied Syrian Golan (A/71/392) would have been more comprehensive, instead of merely relaying the information already presented by his Government and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. Security Council resolution 497 (1981) had declared that the decision by Israel to impose its

laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Syrian Arab Golan was null and void and without international legal effect. Israel had responded to the Organization's repudiation of its occupation by expanding its flagrant violations of international law. Without the backing of certain States with hegemonic influence in the United Nations, that country's policy of aggression would have been thwarted.

86. In the Syrian Golan, the Israeli authorities continued to carry out systematic human rights violations that included racial discrimination and arbitrary arrest, including the re-arrest of a Syrian activist for having exposed Israeli support for terrorists in the area of separation in the Syrian Golan. Moreover, Syrian residents of the Golan who resisted the occupation — a right protected under international law — were sentenced to long prison terms following a show trial. His delegation urged the international community to make every effort to obtain the release of all Syrian prisoners languishing in occupation prisons.

87. The occupying Power had fined and arrested Syrian citizens of the Golan who had attempted to visit their relatives in their home country. Arab villages were isolated from one another and the infirm who were unable to pay the cost of treatment were barred from traveling to Damascus to receive free medical care. In addition, Israel prohibited the construction of homes by the Syrian citizens of the Golan on their own land and had demolished a number of homes belonging to Syrian citizens, on the pretext that they had not obtained construction licences.

88. Israeli cultural violations included the plunder of archaeological sites by occupation authorities, the imposition of an Israeli educational curriculum on Syrian students and the replacement of many Syrian teachers with Israeli teachers. Violations of the rights of Syrian citizens of the Golan included control of their land and resources as part of a concerted effort to destroy their livelihoods. Occupation authorities had seized over three quarters of the total area of the occupied Syrian Golan, most of it agricultural land, for use by the military. Settlements, toxic waste landfills and wind turbines had been built on the land, and the extraction of oil and other natural resources was under way, in violation of the Hague Regulations, which forbade the exploitation of natural resources in occupied territory. Furthermore, Israeli occupation authorities controlled groundwater resources and stole over 400 million cubic metres of water from the Golan each year, diverting it for use by Israeli settlements and selling it at prices nearing a dollar per cubic metre for irrigation. Syrian citizens of the Golan were also prevented from trading their agricultural products in their home country of Syria.

89. The acts of aggression perpetrated by Israel would foster unprecedented tensions in the region and beyond, particularly as that country's support of the Nusrah Front and other terrorist groups had become public. His delegation therefore urged the United Nations to take immediate action to end the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan and have it withdraw to the 1967 borders, in accordance with the relevant resolutions.

90. **Mr. Rivero Rosario** (Cuba) lamenting the enduring plight of the Palestinian people after more than 50 years of illegal foreign occupation and the policies and practices of Israel that violated international human rights and humanitarian law, said that the reports of the Secretary-General and the Special Committee provided abundant, inescapable evidence that the flagrant human rights violations continued unabated.

91. It was regrettable that the Security Council had not succeeded in reaching an agreement to bring an end to the aggressive, colonialist policies and practices of Israel and stop the trampling of the rights of the Palestinian people. Given the alarming inaction of the Council, Cuba called once again on that organ to fulfil its Charter-mandated responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Failing that, Israel would continue to entrench the occupation, undermining the viability of the two-State solution and a just and lasting settlement of the conflict.

92. Cuba welcomed regional and international efforts aimed at a resumption of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians, and reiterated that the only possible solution to the question of Palestine was the peaceful coexistence of two independent States, with an independent, sovereign and viable State of Palestine, within the 1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as its capital. Cuba firmly supported the admission of Palestine as a full Member of the United Nations and

called on the Security Council to make a recommendation in that regard. If the Council failed to do so, the General Assembly must act decisively.

93. Every day, the international community was made aware of shameful and horrible statistics on the murder of Palestinians, including children, arbitrary detentions and escalating violence, while settlement construction continued apace in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and occupied Syrian Golan as Palestinians were evicted from their lands. The blockade was ubiquitous, stifling the economy and increasing hunger, unemployment and poverty. That was no way to achieve the international peace and security that the world desired and for which the Palestinian people longed.

94. Cuba reaffirmed its unwavering support for the Palestinian people and called for an end to the prolonged and unlawful Israeli occupation of Palestine, the immediate and unconditional lifting of the cruel and illegal Gaza blockade and the opening of border crossings and checkpoints. Greater efforts were needed to resolve the dire situation of Palestine refugees, in accordance with the norms and principles of international law and the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

95. **Mr. Zhang** Dianbin (China) said that the Middle East was plagued by unabated local conflicts and rising terrorism with pronounced spillover effects, which were a cause for serious concern. The international community should remain united in urging the concerned parties to practice tolerance, beat swords into ploughshares and give peace a chance so that the people of the region could at last live in tranquillity. The question of Palestine lay at the heart of Middle East conflicts and would continue to weigh on world peace and stability if left unresolved. Safeguarding the legitimate national rights and interests of the Palestinians was the common responsibility of the international community. Continued violent conflict and an unconscionable humanitarian disaster had made it all the more urgent to put an end to that situation.

96. At present, Palestinian-Israeli peace talks remained deadlocked. Both sides should exercise restraint, prevent escalation of the conflict and take concrete steps to strengthen mutual trust, build consensus, address their differences and work to break the impasse so that talks could resume and positive outcomes could be reached. The international community should not stand by while the Middle East peace process stalled, but rather should take action and push for the early achievement of a two-State solution.

97. The international community had recently implemented a range of new ideas in that regard. China commended every effort conducive to diffusing tensions and achieving the two-State solution. It was firmly committed to the just cause of the Palestinian people and worked tirelessly to advance the peace process. In January 2016, in an address to the Arab League, the President of China had reiterated the country's unequivocal support for restoring the legitimate national rights and interests of Palestinians and called for the rekindling of the peace process and for greater progress in rebuilding their economy. In June 2016, the Chinese foreign minister had attended the Middle East Peace Initiative ministerial conference in Paris and had put forth a Chinese proposal for a solution based on "three stops" and "three explorations".

98. In 2016, China had donated 50 million yuan to improve the livelihoods of the Palestinian people. His Government would continue to play a constructive and active role in pushing for a viable solution to the conflict. It consistently advocated for respecting the political systems and pathways chosen by the Palestinian Government and people and encouraged all parties to resolve their differences through dialogue in pursuit of a lasting and sustainable settlement. To that end, the international community should uphold the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and the basic standards governing international relations. China supported a greater United Nations role in resolving that conflict and rejected external military intervention or a solution imposed by force. The international community must adhere to uniform standards and take appropriate action to counter terrorist threats. A holistic approach should be taken to address the symptoms and root causes of the conflict, improve people's livelihood through development, consolidate the capacity for economic and social governance, foster a culture of tolerance and create conditions conducive to lasting peace and stability.

99. **Ms. Dris** (Malaysia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that, year after year, Israel had numerous opportunities to engage with the Special

Committee and clarify its position so that the international community could understand its perspective. Instead, Israel had not even recognized the Special Committee and had obstructed its visits. Her Government deeply regretted that Israel had not taken those opportunities in good faith and looked forward to engaging with it when it acted in accordance with international law and the values and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

*The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.*

United Nations A/C.4/71/SR.20

General Assembly
Seventy-first session

Official Records

Distr.: General
20 January 2017

Original: English

# Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

**Summary record of the 20th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 1 November 2016, at 3 p.m.

*Chair*: Mr. Drobnjak ..... (Croatia)

## Contents

Agenda item 50: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

16-19044 (E)

Please recycle

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 50: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories** (A/71/315, A/71/321, A/71/352, A/71/355, A/71/364 and A/71/392)

1. **Mr. Mounzer** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking on a point of order, said that the interpretation of the statement he had delivered at the previous meeting had contained some grievous errors. While he deeply appreciated the interpreters' diligent efforts, they should exercise greater care to render statements accurately, particularly since delegations provided them with advance copies of those statements.

2. **Ms. Radwan** (Saudi Arabia), speaking on behalf of the Group of Arab States, said that the Group was deeply concerned at the dangerous escalation of acts of violence and provocation perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces and terrorist settlers against Palestinians. Israel thus persisted in violating international humanitarian law and the relevant United Nations resolutions. Expansion of Israeli settlements, home demolitions and seizure of Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem had continued unabated. The occupying Power's attempts to Judaize and ethnically cleanse the Occupied Palestinian Territory gravely imperilled the viability of the peace process, the two-State solution and the establishment of an independent Palestinian State.

3. For nearly half a century, Israel, the occupying Power, had perpetrated countless acts of aggression against the Palestinian people. It continued to use deadly and disproportionate force against, detain, torture and exploit thousands of Palestinians, including women and children. The defenceless Palestinian people had endured the crucible of occupation and international inaction. Israeli acts of terror, which constituted war crimes and crimes against humanity, were on the rise; such crimes must be condemned and their perpetrators held accountable, lest the continued impunity result in the commission of further grave violations.

4. The devastating repercussions of the ten-year blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip by Israel included extreme poverty, economic collapse and rampant unemployment, particularly among the young. Furthermore, the Israeli authorities' arbitrary restrictions on freedom of movement in the West Bank hampered the economic and social life of its residents. There was an international consensus on the fact that Israeli settlements flagrantly contravened international law and constituted a fundamental obstacle to a just settlement through the two-State solution.

5. The Arab Group welcomed the French initiative calling for an international peace conference to end the Israeli occupation of the State of Palestine in accordance with a specific timetable and in line with internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative, as well as to establish an independent State with Jerusalem as its capital.

6. After half a century of procrastination, lack of political will and obstructions to Palestinian attempts to exercise their rights — fanning the flames of violence and terrorism — the Arab Group hoped that 2017 would be the year in which the international community would compel Israel to end its expansionist settlement policies and projects, liberate all occupied Arab lands and implement the two-State solution. The Group welcomed the resolution adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) proclaiming that Jerusalem was Islamic heritage as an important step towards upholding Palestinian rights.

7. The Arab Group would continue to fully support the steadfast Palestinian people in its defence of its land and sacred sites and to oppose all Israeli violations. It called on Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by all political, economic and security agreements it had concluded and by international law, including the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War (Fourth Geneva Convention); end its occupation of Palestinian and other Arab lands; withdraw to the 4 June 1967 borders, advance towards implementing the two-State solution in accordance with the Arab Peace Initiative; and grant independence to the Palestinian people, enabling it to establish a State with Jerusalem as its capital.

8. **Mr. Al-Hamadi** (Qatar) said that Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians and other Arabs in territories occupied by Israel included the indiscriminate use of force, extrajudicial executions, unlawful arrest and detention of Palestinians and

collective punishment measures, in violation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. In addition, Israeli authorities used the separation wall to isolate Palestinian communities, exploit their natural resources and suffocate the Palestinian economy. Israeli settlement activities in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan posed a major threat to the Middle East peace process. In that connection, the Secretary-General's report on Israeli settlements had called on Israeli authorities to halt the construction and expansion of settlements, including through the development of parks; discontinue the retroactive legalization of outposts; and refrain from supporting the initiatives of settler organizations aimed at seizing Palestinian property and forcibly evicting Palestinian residents from it. Israeli authorities must put an end to their discriminatory planning in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and enforce the law without discrimination, including in respect of settlers who perpetrated acts of violence against Palestinians.

9. Attempts to erase the Arab character and demographic composition of Jerusalem and to infringe the sanctity of its Islamic and Christian sites, particularly the Haram al-Sharif, posed a particular threat. Nevertheless, Israel persisted in inflaming the sentiments of Arabs and Muslims around the world by proceeding with its dangerous, illegal escalation aimed at Judaizing and dividing Jerusalem in time and space. Laws approving such actions were null and void. Qatar condemned all attacks on worshipers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque as violations of their right to worship freely.

10. The ongoing blockade of the Gaza Strip had undermined the political, economic, social and cultural rights of the territory's inhabitants and imperilled its economic prospects and the availability of basic services. The restrictions imposed on freedom of movement, especially in situations in which medical care was required, were distressing. Consequently, the blockade was compounding the tragedy that had ensued following the most recent Israeli attack on the Gaza Strip.

11. Half a century of Israeli occupation and the stagnation of the peace process had led to mounting despair and frustration. Moreover, the impunity with which violations were committed fed the cycle of violence and undermined prospects for peace. All crimes committed by the Israeli occupation authorities and terrorist settlers against Palestinians must be condemned; Israel must be held directly accountable, and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

12. His delegation repudiated the illegal Israeli practices in the occupied Syrian Arab Golan, such as the establishment of illegitimate settlements, and attempts to change the territory's demographic composition and physical character and to seize control of its natural resources. The occupying Power's decision to impose its jurisdiction and administration on the Golan was null and void.

13. The Israeli occupation must end, and conditions must be put in place to achieve a lasting, comprehensive and just peace on the basis of the two-State solution, in accordance with United Nations resolutions, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative, in order to uphold the Palestinian people's inalienable right to establish an independent State and return to their home. He therefore called for the prompt implementation of all relevant resolutions and agreements, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which applied to the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab lands occupied by Israel since 1967. In that connection, international protection should be provided to the Palestinian people.

14. **Mr. Salih** (Sudan) said that the investigation conducted by the Special Committee had yielded a detailed, shameful account of the deteriorating human rights situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly with regard to escalating violence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, since September 2015, and the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. The occupying Power persistently refused to cooperate with the Special Committee, barring it from conducting consultations with the competent authorities and from travelling to the occupied territories to meet the victims.

15. His Government condemned the continued construction and expansion of settlements in all parts of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan. All such illegal measures must cease immediately, as they posed the primary obstacle to peace by directly imperilling the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders. The range of systematic violations included

exploitation of natural resources, home demolitions, forced expulsion of Palestinian civilians, hindrances of humanitarian assistance, attacks on medical personnel, and acts of violence and terrorism by settlers and provocateurs, including at the holy sites in occupied East Jerusalem, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Moreover, the ongoing land and sea blockade of the Gaza Strip was a form of collective punishment and as such, violated international humanitarian law. The illegal blockade should be suspended and all crossings reopened, in line with international humanitarian law and United Nations resolutions.

16. The Sudan deplored the illegal, discriminatory Israeli policies in the occupied Syrian Golan, including the presence of military bases within and around residential districts and recent declarations to the effect that Israel would be exercising sovereignty over the occupied Syrian Golan, in clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and the Fourth Geneva Convention. His delegation called on the Israeli authorities to fully withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the 4 June 1967 borders. Fifty years on, the time had come to put an end to the Israeli occupation, which had caused the Palestinian people endless suffering and contributed greatly to regional and international instability. In closing, he reiterated the unwavering commitment of the Sudan to finding a just solution to the question of Palestine refugees and to upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination, independence and the establishment of a viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital.

17. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that it was incumbent upon the international community to help the Palestinian people end the Israeli occupation of its land, promote its economy and recover sovereignty over its natural resources. She wondered what Israel expected to gain from its illegal occupation of Palestine. The persistence of illegal Israeli practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other occupied Arab lands constituted an open challenge to the willingness to establish relations between countries on the basis of equality, justice and the rule of law.

18. Despite the international consensus condemning its expansionist policies, Israel continued to build settlements on occupied Palestinian land. According to statistics compiled by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, plans had been advanced in the first two weeks of September for 463 units in four settlements in Area C of the occupied West Bank, in addition to the 1000 units in East Jerusalem and 735 in the West Bank approved the previous July and August. Those developments underscored the fact that the land of the State of Palestine was shrinking and that Israel was proceeding along a path that distanced it from the peace process.

19. Israel had arrested 7,000 Palestinians and placed 700 of them under administrative arrest, with 340 children among them. Children as young as 13 years of age had been struck down by Israeli police in 2016. It was difficult to reconcile the Israeli Government's talk of security with its widespread arrests of Palestinian children, shattering their hopes.

20. The Israeli blockade of the Gaza Strip, entering its tenth year, continued to have tragic consequences. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) had predicted that Gaza would be uninhabitable by 2020 were the situation to deteriorate further. Clearly, it did not suffice for Israel to prevent the Palestinian people from exercising its right to life by seizing its possessions, expelling Palestinians from their homes and supporting settler domination; it even denied the Palestinian dead the right to an appropriate burial.

21. Israel imposed restrictions on gatherings of worshipers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Church of the Resurrection in Jerusalem, a city dear to the hearts of all monotheistic believers. In that regard, she reiterated the need to respect the historic character of landmarks in the resolution just adopted by UNESCO. Lebanon endorsed the French and Egyptian initiatives to revive peace talks with a view to ending the occupation as soon as possible, in accordance with the Madrid principles, the Arab Peace Initiative and United Nations resolutions, and called on the international community to protect the Palestinian people.

22. **Mr. Gumende** (Mozambique) said that his delegation was deeply concerned by the lack of improvement in the human rights situation of the Palestinian people and other Arabs as a result of Israel's persistence in expanding settlements, demolishing homes, exploiting natural resources and

escalating its violence against the local population, in contravention of international law. By depriving the Palestinian people of its right to development, Israel continually deferred that people's aspiration to well-being and freedom. In particular, the continuous destruction of social infrastructure in the occupied territories of Palestine led to growing numbers of displaced people and refugees and constituted a major obstacle to the two-State solution and to lasting regional peace and stability. His Government therefore encouraged Israel to cooperate with the Special Committee.

23. Mozambique endorsed international efforts to achieve a negotiated peace agreement. It called on the concerned parties to do their utmost to reach a sustainable political solution and on the international community to take tangible actions in support of those efforts. Lastly, it supported the Quartet's recently issued recommendations for reviving the peace process and hoped that Israel and Palestine would accept and implement them.

24. **Mr. Mminele** (South Africa) said that against the backdrop of heightened tensions and sporadic acts of violence between Palestinians and Israelis, illegal Israeli settlements had led to a fragmentation of the West Bank and continued to threaten the viability of a Palestinian State. Gaza remained under siege, with the humanitarian situation rapidly deteriorating. His delegation condemned all acts of violence and urged Member States to direct the parties towards achieving a lasting solution to the conflict, given the untenable nature of the situation on the ground and its repercussions on peace, security, stability and development. Ending the occupation was in the interest of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

25. Turning to the situation of Palestinian prisoners and detainees, in particular, women and children, he called on Israel to respect the human rights of all Palestinian prisoners and abide by international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israeli authorities should fully and immediately implement the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners and the United Nations Rules for the Treatment of Women Prisoners and Non-custodial Measures for Women Offenders.

26. The continued demolition of Palestinian homes and structures provided to Palestinians as humanitarian assistance was particularly distressing. Furthermore, the Bedouin community in Area C had borne the brunt of the impact of demolitions and forced transfer, practices that appeared aimed at forcibly removing the Bedouin community from that area. His delegation was concerned at the rising number of cases of settler violence against Palestinians and appealed to the Israeli authorities to take action against the perpetrators. It also condemned in the strongest terms possible the Israeli authorities' refusal to release the bodies of Palestinians killed by Israeli forces and called for the immediate release of the bodies in order to allow the families to bury their loved ones in keeping with their religion and traditions. Moreover, he stressed the need for Israel to end the illegal blockade of Gaza, which aggravated the dire humanitarian and socioeconomic situation there.

27. Women and girls in Palestine were exposed to degrading circumstances, with fear and helplessness informing their daily lives. The Special Committee must accord due attention to the gross violations of their human rights. To conclude, he reiterated that comprehensive and unconditional negotiations on all final status issues were the only way to bring about genuine, lasting peace between Israel and Palestine and promote regional peace and security.

28. **Ms. Özgür** (Turkey) said that her country remained committed to the establishment of a peaceful, secure, stable, inclusive and democratic environment respectful of human rights and freedoms in the region. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to undermine the prospect of establishing such an environment and achieving regional and global peace. Fifty years on, Palestinians under Israeli occupation were still deprived of their right to a decent life, respect and freedom. Settlement expansion persisted in spite of international condemnation, and impunity led to rising settler violence, which in turn prevented the affected Palestinian population from enjoying a host of other human rights. Attempts to undermine the sanctity of holy sites and the historical status of the Haram al-Sharif also escalated the tension. There must be accountability for human rights violations, and the rule of law must be upheld. Inaction by the international community aggravated Palestinian suffering and had deplorable consequences for the region and beyond.

29. In order to overcome the current political impasse, the Palestinians should be able to sit at the negotiation table as the State of Palestine, on an equal footing with Israel, and voice their legitimate demands in unity, with a view to achieving a lasting peace. The international community had a duty to renew its engagement to reach a negotiated political settlement based on the two-State solution, in accordance with international law, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That vision required the establishment of a sovereign and independent Palestinian State within pre-1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Turkey would continue to support its Palestinian sisters and brothers in their pursuit of the objective of living in peace, prosperity and dignity.

30. **Mr. Islam** (Bangladesh) said that once again, the Special Committee had been denied the opportunity to consult with the relevant Israeli authorities and gain access to the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Despite repeated defiance by Israel, his delegation hoped that the Israeli authorities would change course and take into account the Special Committee's recommendations. The Special Committee served a critical purpose by keeping the cause of the Palestinian people and of other Arab populations under Israeli occupation alive and relevant amidst the many armed conflicts across the world.

31. Israeli settlements and the wall in the West Bank and East Jerusalem stood as the most blatant symbols of Israeli occupation and posed the largest threat to the viability of the two-State solution. The settlements, which had been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice, continued to encroach into Palestinian land, displacing people and communities and disrupting their livelihood and traditional lifestyles. Regrettably, the Israeli authorities continued to allow settlers to perpetrate indiscriminate acts of violence against Palestinians with impunity, while individuals and entities engaged in unregulated exploitation of natural resources in the occupied territories. In addition, Israel persisted in using excessive force, a serious crime under the international criminal law regime and a violation of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Indiscriminate attacks against medical facilities and vehicles aggravated an already dire humanitarian situation.

32. He deplored the degrading and often inhumane treatment of Palestinian detainees, including children, and their veritable lack of recourse to justice, as well as the Israeli refusal to return the bodies of dead Palestinians to their families for burial. The Israeli land and sea blockade of Gaza, into its tenth year, was an egregious show of the collective punishment of 2 million people. The occasional disruption of humanitarian assistance and other basic amenities had made Gaza almost uninhabitable. Bangladesh therefore urged the international community to prevail upon Israel to lift the unjustified blockade immediately.

33. The Security Council must act decisively to pursue a peaceful, just and lasting solution to the protracted crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the road map, the Arab Peace Initiative and the principle of land for peace. However, the genuine political will to move towards those solutions was fundamentally absent. In order to mobilize sufficient political will, Bangladesh supported the proposal to declare 2017 the international year to end the occupation, in commemoration of the fiftieth year of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories. His country would continue to support the work of the Special Committee and other relevant United Nations mechanisms and entities to raise international awareness of the grave human rights violations and humanitarian consequences endured by the Palestinian people under illegal occupation for half a century.

34. **Mr. Dehghani** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his country deeply regretted that the Israeli regime had once again prevented the Special Committee from gaining access to the occupied territories in line with its mandate. It was concerned about the regime's escalation of violence against the population of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem; its exploitation of Palestinian natural resources; and the dire humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip, which continued to be the target of a blockade and successive military aggressions. That blockade, which had just entered its tenth year, must be lifted, and all crossings must be opened promptly and unconditionally. Furthermore, all collective punishment measures, including restrictions on freedom of movement across the Occupied Palestinian Territory, demolition of homes, residency revocations, closure of towns and delays in returning bodies for burial, must be ended.

35. All such practices were in grave breach of international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and various United Nations resolutions, and the resulting violation of a range of human rights amounted to a war crime under international humanitarian law. Those and other systematic violations, including the demolition of homes, the forced displacement of Palestinian civilians, and the arrest and detention of Palestinians were illegal under international law and must cease. Incessant violence by Israeli settlers and extremists at sensitive religious sites, particularly at Al-Aqsa Mosque, and lack of accountability in the justice system, had worsened conditions on the ground. The abhorrent Israeli occupation, which remained one of the most destabilizing factors and threatened international peace and security, must be ended.

36. With reference to the Syrian Golan, his Government reaffirmed that all the unlawful actions committed by Israel, including the continued deployment of landmines, the presence of the Israeli regime's army bases in and around Syrian residential and civilian areas, the construction and expansion of settlements and the imposition of a new curriculum and education system on Syrians constituted a clear violation of international law, the Charter of the United Nations, the relevant United Nations resolutions and the Fourth Geneva Convention. The Islamic Republic of Iran urged the international community to bring pressure to bear on the Israeli regime to withdraw completely from the occupied Syrian Golan. To conclude, he emphasized the important role played by the Special Committee and reaffirmed his Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people in their legitimate struggle to end the occupation and exercise their right to self-determination.

37. **Mr. Pak** Chol Jin (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the international community had been working for over half a century to resolve the Middle East conflict sparked by the Israeli occupation of Arab territories in 1948. The unanimous desire to resolve the question of Palestine as soon as possible had been underscored in various United Nations resolutions, and at the fifth Emergency Summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the seventeenth Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries,. Nevertheless, the prospects for peace looked grim, owing largely to the aggressively expansionist occupation activities undertaken by Israel and the unwavering support of the United States of America for that country's policies, hypocritically assuming the guise of arbitrator for peace. Those two countries should cease their State terrorism and tackle the peace process in an honest manner. His delegation supported the Palestinian people in their struggle to realize their legitimate right to establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital and sought a peaceful, impartial settlement of the Middle East issue for all Arab people.

38. **Mr. Atlassi** (Morocco) said that the report of the Special Committee had noted an escalation in violence since September 2015 and throughout 2016, albeit of lesser intensity. The period covered in the report had been the bloodiest since the end of the second intifada. The closing of border crossings had increased, including in East Jerusalem, as had settlement activity, home demolitions and other Israeli practices, sparking feelings of desperation and despair in Palestinians, feeding into the cycle of violence and undermining peace and security. In its statements before international forums, his Government had made known its staunch opposition to violence and injustice against the Palestinian people. Morocco deplored the Israeli expansion of its settlement policies and other practices, which were in violation of international law and undermined the resumption of negotiations aimed at reaching a just settlement on the basis of the two-State solution.

39. The international community must bear full responsibility for finding a way out of the stalemate that had reigned since negotiations had ended, leading to violence and a deteriorating state of affairs. It must therefore take the lead in convincing the Palestinians and the Israelis to return to the negotiating table. Negotiations should be pursued in good faith and follow a specific timetable in order to restore trust between the parties and lay the foundations for a viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in security, peace and harmony, in line with internationally recognized resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. His country therefore welcomed the French initiative calling for an international peace conference to end the occupation and keep the two-State solution — itself endangered by settlement policies — alive. Morocco stood by its endorsement of the Arab Peace Initiative, which encapsulated its

position on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and set out a clear framework for achieving peace through the establishment of an independent State of Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital.

40. **Ms. Sayed** (Pakistan) said that Israel persistently refused to cooperate with the Special Committee and denied access to international bodies for investigation and verification of the situation on the ground. Innocent Palestinian civilians, including women and children, continued to suffer brutal repression. Restrictions on Palestinian freedom, harassment by Israeli settlers, terror and provocation in and around the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound and other holy sites and bleak prospects for a comprehensive, negotiated peace deal all compounded the plight of the Palestinian people. Collective punishment continued to be meted out despite its obvious futility.

41. The Special Committee's report highlighted the gravity of the situation in the occupied Arab territories; settlement expansion, exploitation of natural resources, administrative detention (including detention of children), excessive use of force and extrajudicial executions, home demolitions and the forcible transfer of Bedouin and herder communities in the West Bank exacerbated that situation and threatened the viability of the two-State solution. New regulations on the use of live ammunition by Israeli security forces — a grim example of the heavy-handed practices of the occupation forces — were inconsistent with international law. Moreover, the installations of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and schools were being targeted with tear gas, stun grenades and other ammunition. The dramatic increase in detention of Palestinians on charges of incitement on social media had deepened the sense of fear among the Palestinian people; such restrictions on freedom of expression would only engender further violence.

42. The illegal blockade of Gaza was seriously hampering rebuilding efforts. Some 100,000 Palestinians remained displaced two years after the hostilities ended, and the entire population was dependent on aid, with unemployment rates among the highest in the world. In addition, the repeated cycles of conflict had resulted in heavy loss of life, psychological trauma and major damage to infrastructure, severely undermining the provision of basic services. Before long, a blockaded Gaza would become altogether uninhabitable. The restrictions, forced displacements and home demolitions carried out by Israeli forces in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, were also exacerbating despair and insecurity among Palestinians.

43. Welcoming the Secretary-General's visit to the region in July, her delegation called for tangible progress through political solutions. A just, sustainable and equitable settlement of the Middle East conflict could only be achieved through the establishment of an independent, contiguous and viable State of Palestine based on the pre-1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. A long-term solution would also require occupation forces to withdraw from all Arab lands, including Lebanon and the Syrian Golan Heights. In closing, she commended UNRWA for its excellent work on behalf of Palestine refugees and stressed the need to uphold pledges of assistance to the Agency in the light of its urgent financial needs.

44. **Mr. Bouassila** (Algeria) said that the international community's inability to find a just solution to the question of Palestine - one that fully recognized the national rights of the Palestinian people over its territories occupied in 1967 and provided for the establishment of an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital - attested to the failure of the contemporary international system. Despite the adoption of numerous international resolutions calling for an end to the occupation, illegal Israeli settlement policies on Palestinian land persisted, including the construction of the racist separation wall, the displacement of Palestinian civilians, the imposition of collective punishment and the oppressive blockade of Gaza, in flagrant violation of international law and international humanitarian law. The reality on the ground amounted to a series of human rights violations against the Palestinian people and others under Israeli occupation. Settler violence; exploitation of natural resources in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and the occupied Syrian Golan; the forced transfer of Bedouin communities; extrajudicial executions; the refusal by Israeli occupation authorities to release the bodies of the Palestinian dead; and the deplorable treatment of prisoners in detention centres were just some of the abuses that were committed with impunity.

45. Palestinian civilians had the right to protection in accordance with international humanitarian law, and Israel, as the occupying Power, was required to guarantee the exercise of that right. The refusal by Israel to implement the Fourth Geneva Convention in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and other Arab territories it had occupied since 1967 defied the will of the international community. The attempt to present the settlement policy in occupied Arab lands as a fait accompli was a flagrant violation of human rights and internationally recognized resolutions. Those Israeli violations remained the foremost obstacle to the two-State solution. Therefore, the international community was duty-bound to pressure Israel to end its occupation of all Arab territories and to help the Palestinian people establish an independent State with East Jerusalem as its capital, and exercise full control over its natural resources within the framework of the two-State solution.

*Statements made in exercise of the right of reply*

46. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for the State of Palestine) said that her delegation's statement at the previous meeting had reflected — without distortion or rhetoric — the facts about the suffering endured daily by the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation for nearly half a century. Israeli representatives persistently refused to address that occupation in the context of international law, within which the reports of the Special Committee and the Secretary-General were being examined by the Committee. Her delegation denounced the non-cooperation of Israel with, and slanderous charges against, the Special Committee, whose reports contained information amassed by credible United Nations entities. Furthermore, the claim that the reports were one-sided or biased was spurious; while the law was not biased, it did stand on the side of justice and could not be twisted to justify the actions of the aggressor at the expense of the victims. The Committee's deliberations were not about Israel-bashing but instead about facing the truth and seeking ways to redress a massive injustice

47. She implored the Israeli delegation to seriously discuss the substantive issue of the human rights violations being perpetrated against the Palestinian people under foreign occupation and subjugation. Such an approach to the discussion would surely result in a different Israeli narrative. Despite the dynamics of terror and incitement in the conflict, it was fundamentally about a people denied its freedom and rights by an oppressive, illegal occupation — a people that was struggling to survive, attain its dignity and seek the solace that only justice and the exercise of its rights could provide. Living freely, instead of under the yoke of foreign occupation, was a legitimate aspiration, as was aspiring to the same rights, peace and security that other peoples enjoyed. However, attempts to justify the occupation and its crimes were illegitimate, and distorted; diversionary narratives that presented Israel as humane and magnanimous towards the people it had occupied for 50 years were offensive and demeaning. After Israel had blockaded and suffocated the Gaza Strip for nearly 10 years, seeking admiration for facilitating the territory's reconstruction was absurd and provocative; under international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israel, the occupying Power, had clear and specific obligations, not mere favours it could choose to do.

48. As the fiftieth anniversary of the occupation neared, Israel should act immediately to end the illegal, cruel occupation that was destroying both peoples, instead of attempting to further justify and entrench it. For its part, the international community must not accept empty slogans and distorted pretext from the occupying Power but should insist on respect for international law, which was the cornerstone for peace and security for Palestine and Israel, and for every other country in the world.

49. **Ms. Horsandi** (Israel) said that many of the representatives in attendance still refused, 68 years on, to recognize the State of Israel. That week marked the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, one of the first times in the modern era that a significant world power had officially recognized the Jewish people's right to their ancient homeland. That document had been incorporated into the 1922 decision by the League of Nations to create a mandate aimed at establishing a national home for the Jewish people in the land of Israel, transforming the Declaration from a policy position into an international legal obligation accepted by the international community as a whole. Regrettably, some of those present, as well as the Palestinian leadership, had systematically continued to undermine the basic rights of Jewish peoplehood and the legitimacy of the State of Israel, as evidenced by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' announcement

that he intended to sue the British Government over the Balfour Declaration. The historical denial of the internationally recognized rights of the Jewish people was also reflected in recent attempts by UNESCO to erase the Jewish and Christian heritage of Jerusalem, a city that was the cradle of three monotheistic religions. At the previous meeting, the representative of Palestine had echoed allegations indicative of an attempt to rewrite history and propagate a one-sided narrative, all stemming from the persistent Palestinian refusal to recognize the Jewish State in any boundary. Whereas Israel had repeatedly stressed its adherence to the principle of two States for two peoples, the Palestinians remained fixated on unfounded allegations from the past instead of moving towards a better future for both peoples. She hoped that they would soon accept her Government's repeated calls for the resumption of dialogue without preconditions and invest in ending the conflict.

50. As for the other speakers, neither the Islamic Republic of Iran, the number one supporter of terror in the Middle East and a Government that openly called for the destruction of a Member State of the United Nations, nor Lebanon, a country controlled by the Iranian proxy and designated terror organization Hezbollah, had the moral standing to preach. Moreover, instead of audaciously attacking Israel using the language of human rights, the Government of Venezuela, which had banned the freedom of assembly and speech and the right to a fair trial and was blocking its own suffering people from receiving international aid, should take the advice dispensed by its representative and create an environment conducive to freely expressing one's views and reporting human rights violations in his country.

51. **Mr. Malcki** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the baseless accusations made against his Government by the representative of the Israeli regime amounted to a futile attempt to divert the Committee's attention from that regime's criminal aggression against the Palestinians, Lebanese, Syrians and other peoples of the region. As all Committee members knew well, a regime that had perpetrated atrocities and that was the primary source of terror in the Middle East and beyond was in no position to portray itself as an advocate of human rights and democracy or to level fabricated charges at another country.

52. The deliberations of international forums had demonstrated how the child-killing Israeli regime had continuously and deliberately flouted every norm of international law and dozens of United Nations resolutions, systematically violating human rights principles. Various United Nations resolutions and reports illustrated the regime's lack of respect for the values of the civilized world and the fundamental human rights principles according to which the world community operated. In that regard, he recalled that the United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict had authenticated and confirmed serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights — some of which amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity — during the Israeli regime's military aggression against Gaza. The international community should acknowledge the detrimental impact of that regime's dangerous policies and act decisively to prevent further violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the territories under occupation. To conclude, he reiterated his Government's unwavering support for the Palestinian people's legitimate struggle against the occupation and its quest to exercise its right to self-determination and all other human rights.

*The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.*